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NEW STATESMAN
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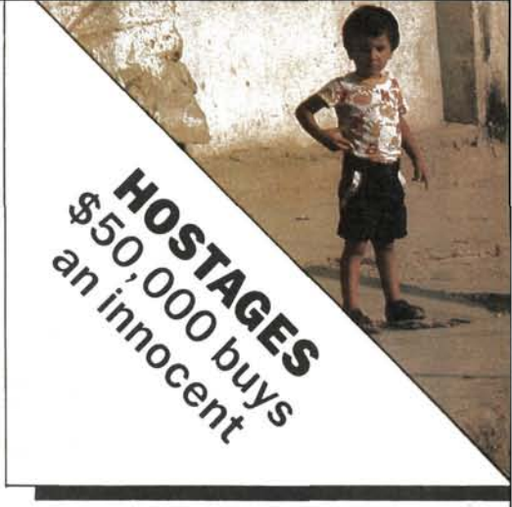

HOSTAGES
$50,000 buys an innocent

Deirdre Wood's MEAN TIME in Greenwich

'It's a bit dodgy'

Angela Rumbold MP on the Greenwich poll

Cover photo: Stephano Cagnoni/Report

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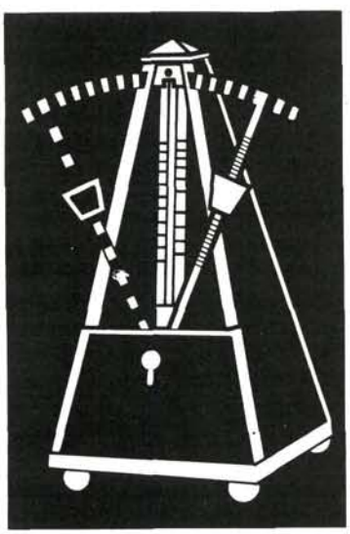

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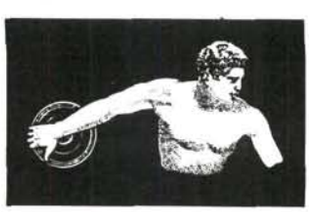

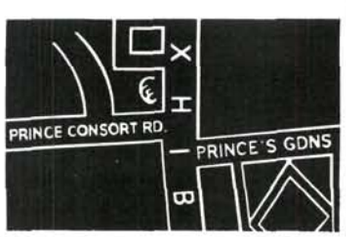

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NEW STATESMAN

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NEXT WEEK

It's three years since the miners went on strike — how has the strike moved the politics of the left? *Plus*: Christopher Hitchens on Star Wars; Andrew Lumsden on fear and loathing in an Aids scare; after the Irish election; the slave labourers of Chernobyl

A good slip

DAVID BLUNKETT, the Sheffield leader, did his party and politics in general a good turn earlier this week, when he indicated to *Woman's Own* that he didn't regard a Labour win as automatic. So did Bryan Gould, the Labour Party's campaigns co-ordinator, when he said that Labour was not 'guaranteed victory'. So, too, did Neil Kinnock, when he told the shadow cabinet that the party needed two or three more percentage points before it could be said to have achieved a breakthrough.

They all did us a good turn because they said only what is obvious, but what a lousy convention has forbidden politicians to utter. It is *not* inconceivable — as David Blunkett said — that Mrs Thatcher will achieve a third term as Prime Minister: it is not inconceivable, either, that Neil Kinnock will achieve a first term. The polls have settled, over the past few months — a long time in pre-electoral politics — to show the two main parties roughly equal, with the Alliance hovering around (probably now slightly above) 20 per cent. The folly lies, not in saying this, but in tolerating a pretence that party notables must publicly believe in what is presently inconceivable — certain victory for anyone.

Far better — is it not? — to treat electors as adults and discuss the uncertainties *as* uncertainties: for it is terribly easy to conclude that a politician who speaks ringingly of sure things when his intellect cannot possibly support his confidence may find the posture habitual on other occasions.

And, after all, what's the gain? Does it really put heart into supporters who have access to the same information, are able to make the same deductions, as anyone else? Is the custom of expressing total confidence not a hangover from an earlier era when information and analysis were scarce, and when the party faithful depended much more on party leaders for information as well as uplift — and when the forecast of electoral victory could be as right as anything else?

THE RATIONAL approach is better: in advancing it, Bryan Gould has made a fine start, one which justifies his being loaded with responsibilities by Kinnock. Both he — and, rather differently, Blunkett — show the self-confidence and sense to present a case as though it were a *case*, and not a nail which had to be driven into the wall. They don't, by and large, insult their listeners' intelligence by extravagant claims and theatrical denunciations. They will gain in the long run by it, as will the Labour Party when it is seen to be represented by them.

But they probably will lose in the short run — as Blunkett did this week, feeling constrained or cajoled to put out disclaimers to his obviously sensible comments. The short-term loss is what stops this style catching on: it resides in the coverage by a largely hostile press which at once delights in Labour's lag in the polls and reacts in mock horror when Labour politicians accept that victory will not be a walkover. Every reasonable concession to the obvious or the probable can and will be treated as a sign of a failing of the will, enforcing a rigidly triumphalist style which is bound to sound empty.

The truth of the matter is in Blunkett's mouth: Mrs Thatcher should be seen as unelectable — for unemployment, for the decay of manufacturing, for the collapse in living standards of the poor — but she is not. Labour does not dominate the country: the Alliance, in proportional terms, holds the power balance. It is absurd that no Labour figure can say the above without attracting headlines and odium: but those who have dared should go on saying it until both the headlines and the odium stop (probably sooner than they think).

Only by making it obvious that Labour can face up to a not entirely hopeful, not entirely depressing position will the pre-electoral hype begin to shift away from a relentless search for banana skins — and move (who knows?) to policies, and an examination of the government's record. And *that* should be worth a few percentage points. □

John Cooley

A Diary piece (25 April) asserted that John Cooley, an American ABC news correspondent in the UK, had been 'pursuing his personal vendetta' against Colonel Gadafy of Libya for years and that he had advocated Colonel Gadafy's overthrow and assassination. The Diary piece misprinted the words of a *Washington Star* article published in March 1981. Mr Cooley did not use the word 'liquidate Gadafy' as printed. He has never advocated the assassination and overthrow of Colonel Gadafy, nor has he shown any anti-Arab bias in his writing or broadcasts.

We apologise for any embarrassment the error may have caused Mr Cooley. We have agreed to pay his legal costs and to donate a sum to charity.

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MOSCOW DIARY

Moscow is probably the most thrilling capital in the world these days, with a sense of intellectual creativity bubbling in the theatre, in film and throughout the arts and media. I would not go so far as to call it a mood of liberation, not yet. There's still too much uncertainty about how far it all can go before the Party takes fright and calls a halt.

One of the curious features of this cultural renaissance is the way the far-flung reaches of the Soviet empire are coming to the aid of the heartland. The key film, *Pokoyaniye*, which uses Fellini-like allegory to explore the Stalin terror, was made in Georgia. In Moscow cinemas, you hear the original Georgian soundtrack with a Russian translation dubbed crudely on top. You get the same multi-lingual mix with the staggering documentary film *Is It Easy To Be Young*, which was made in Latvia. It is the first film to explore youth alienation, and the plight of the Afghan veterans, some of them permanently crippled in the war, others who simply refuse to wear the medals they won there.

The Russian contribution to the new cinema is not nearly so impressive. Perhaps, the most interesting so far has been *Plumbum*, a film which attacks one of the canons of the old regime. For half a century, little Pavel Morozov has been the archetypal good Soviet boy, because he shopped his father to the secret police as an enemy of the people. *Plumbum* makes the obvious point that this is not necessarily a good idea.

There has been rather less fuss about Gleb Panfilov's movie *The Topic*, perhaps because it was made back in the 1970s, but has only just been allowed to go on release. Perhaps the first Soviet film to deal sympathetically with Jewish emigration, it revolves around the struggle between two men for the love of a women. On known simply as 'Man with a Beard', renounced his literary career in disgust after refusing to rewrite his books to conform with Soviet censorship and took a job as a grave digger while applying to leave for Israel. The other is a successful playwright, who sold out his principles for success within the system. Neither the nature of the girl's choice between them, nor the characters of the two male protagonists are as simple as they seem. It is a film that ought to come to Britain. Channel 4, please note.

○

The British press corps in Moscow has almost doubled in the two years I have been here. The *Independent* and ITN TV have been given a clearance to open a bureau, the *Irish Times* is on its way, the *Daily Mail* and the *Standard* have a full-time stringer. The only real gap that is left is the *Daily Mirror*, which for all its faults remains the only non-Tory mass-market paper. From occasional copies I see, there seems little space for foreign news amid all the revelations about the *EastEnders*. It is more than simply nostalgia for the old *Mirror* which makes me think they ought to be here. Gorbachev's attemps to move out of the old Soviet straitjacket towards democratic socialism is probably the seminal political event of our times. The challenge to present this to ordinary people in a serious but approachable way is one the old *Mirror* would have leapt at. From this side of the Soviet border, British socialism and the *Daily Mirror* alike look old and tired and feeble. A touch of the Brezhnevs, to be frank. A window onto the Soviet Union would be a very good thing for them both.

○

In pottering around the world for the *Guardian*, I have not been over-impressed by British diplomacy on the ground. I remember calling on the British Ambassador in Seoul just after the assassination of President Park by the head of his own CIA (in a private brothel, as I recall). I asked him what was going on, and he said: 'My dear chap, all I know around here is what the Americans tell me.'

Moscow has therefore come as a revelation. The tradition has been for years that the Westerners here are under siege, all in it together, and so the social intimacy between press, businessmen and diplomats is so close as to be incestuous. It is helped by the Moscow rule known as 'Swan' which is drilled into all single folk arriving here. It stands for 'Sleep White and NATO'.

Social life apart, the British diplomats are a well-informed crew. Geoffrey Murrel is widely reckoned as the outstanding Kremlinologist, even though half his card indexes are out of date with the speed of Gorbachev's personnel changes. Commercial Counsellor Robert Chase is credited almost single-handedly with getting British exporters the right to put their prices in Ecus, the low-interest rate Euro-currency, rather than high-interest sterling. And Donald, the Maclaren of Maclaren, official bagpiper to the Western community and star of the BBC film *Caviar and Cornflakes*, is probably the best informed man on the minutiae of arms control. I should declare an interest: his wife is godmother to our youngest daughter, which in itself says much for press-diplomat relations out here.

○

Muscovites are converting their balconies to extra rooms these days, to make a few roubles from out-of-town Soviet tourists. I don't think anyone would ever want to rent space in Grisha Bruskin's studio, though. It could not be more central, overlooking the statue to Oayakovsky on Moscow's Gorky Street. But it seems a point of pride among many Soviet artists to maintain the spartan and messy traditions of garret life. Half-squeezed paint tubes and canvasses in progress everywhere, a battered divan and chairs with three legs, and ashtrays overflowing with the cheap 'Yava' cigarettes. Curling photos of the poets Mandelstam and Baudelaire share the wall with Grisha's paintings. His two main themes are Bosch-like portrayals of Jewish mythology and an endless series exploring the theme of Soviet iconography. He paints grey statues of the Stalin era, happy workers, heroic soldiers, buxom farmgirls, hopeful children, and decks them out with colourful busts of Lenin or Soviet medals, or guns, or meat ration cards, Aeroflot cabin bags, Kremlin towers and the like.

In effect it is highly subversive, and helps to explain why his earlier exhibitions have been closed down on their opening days. But along with a whole group of 'official' artists (which means that they are members of the Union of Artists) he is now on show in a dramatically good and exciting exhibition out at the Red Guard Hall in southern Moscow. 'Being a member of the Union means that I get permission to have a studio, I get access to canvasses and paint and brushes that would otherwise not be available, and I cannot be arrested for being a parasite — or unemployed,' he explains. 'I was made a member of the Union nearly 20 years ago, when I was painting very different stuff, and you have to remember that no artist has ever been expelled from the Union for his paintings alone. For expressing certain views, or other actions, people have been expelled, but banning an artist for his art is a precedent nobody wants to set.'

○

So much has been written about the Jewish protest demos and the beatings-up in Moscow's Arbat that I do not want to labour the point. But since we know from the Zircon affair that Britain's top spooks read the *Statesman*, I can pass on something to their advantage. One of the KGB plainclothes chaps who was directing matters in the Arbat finally strolled off to his car, a Toyota with the special number plates identifying it as accredited to a Japanese business mission in Moscow. We always used to look out for anonymous Russian Volgas in our rear-view mirror. Now we had better keep an eye on the cars with yellow number plates that begin M005.

Martin Walker

ROGER WODDIS

This desirable cubbyhole

(After 'Miss Twye', by Gavin Ewart)

A converted broom-cupboard opposite Harrods, measuring 5ft 6in by 11ft, has been sold for £36,500

Miss Twye was soaping her breasts in the sink
(Her flat was tiny, though lined with mink),
When the notion struck her that Old Mother Hubbard
Would have adored such a sweet little cupboard.

She dried herself and brushed her hair,
And gazing round her *pied-à-terre*,
She said to herself, 'I'm terribly glad
I decided to buy this bijou pad.'

The room indeed was admittedly small,
But the carpeting went from wall to wall,
And if she felt like buying some Spode,
It only meant popping across the road.

'It may be difficult swinging a cat,
But it's lovely to live in a Knightsbridge flat.
I'd rather have this than a castle in Spain —
Though it might get cramped when I entertain.'

It's boring to hear some people declare
All they want is a room somewhere.
'If they're all that desperate, I wonder why
They don't simply buy one,' said Miss Twye.

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The Member for Hanna Central

VINCENT HANNA has won every by-election at which he has stood. He is always the best candidate, forcing the issue onto his terrain, creating the agenda and the news, attracting the largest crowds. When Tony Benn (just) won Chesterfield, he said Hanna (and his polls) was a member of the SDP. When Ossie O'Brien (briefly) won Darlington, the SDP blamed its candidate's destruction on Hanna. Last week, Angela Rumbold, the Education Minister, accused Vincent's polls showing the Tory vote slumping of being 'dodgy'.

He is the coconut for politicians to shy at when they begin to panic. The winner may take all, but the losers get Vincent — big as the side of a bus, hectoring, pompous, endlessly nosey, files bulging with bits of political history from which few candidates are immune, and ego as vast as his belt. He sets them up and knocks them down with all the grinning charm of an Irish wolfhound caged since the last by-election on a Complan diet.

His colleagues in the hack packs either resent him, or resent him bitterly: he is never 'one of us', since his showmanship puts him apart and his pre-emption of press conference time reduces anyone else with a line of questioning to speechless fury. The conventional mode of the British journalist is rat-like cunning, occasionally mixed with understated disdain: Vincent's cunning is that of the anaconda, his disdain that of the dog for the lamp-post — which is how he describes the perfect relationship between the journalist and the politician.

He does whatever he does at full throat. He does not just know politicians: he sits up with Neil Kinnock until three in the morning after a big speech (Kinnock's, in this instance) crooning American civil rights ballads and strumming his guitar. He is not just active in the journalists' union: he constitutes a separate pole of power in TV centre, and stopped the news output for a day 18 months ago over the BBC's decision not to show the film *Real Lives*.

And, of course, he does not just report by-elections, he stages them. He transforms the set piece press conference, stodgy affairs when un-Hanna'd into court rooms for his Clarence Darrow impersonations (he, like his father before him, was a Belfast lawyer). He grabs the candidates by the throats and squeezes them till they holler — or get sarcastic ('Is there any question you would like to ask Vincent?', minder Frank Dobson MP asked the hapless Greenwich front runner at the end of one such session last week).

He is too big for his boots (and his suits) and constitutes a standing and constant affront to the BBC's vow of impartiality. But as long as all the savaged candidates agree on that, he and the Corporation are OK. Which is good, because so is he.

John Lloyd

Your pound in their pocket

ACCORDING to opinion polls, people want Nigel Lawson to spend more on the welfare state, rather than tax cuts for those with jobs, in his Budget next month. The British Social Attitudes Survey even shows that for the past two years more people would accept increased taxes to pay for social spending that want to 'leave things as they are' — the safe answer for uncommitted voters.

The Social Attitudes Survey tested support for spending more on 'health, education and social benefits': but the first two have a much more positive image than the third. How can the electorate's swing against Thatcherism be translated into support for improved social security benefits? The Child Poverty Action Group this week publishes a broadsheet to provoke debate about the alternative to Norman Fowler's 'Review' of social security, which passed into law in the teeth of public indifference last year.

The broadsheet, called *There Is An Alternative* (CPAG, 1 Bath St, London EC1V 9PY, 50p), sets out clearly what the objectives of an ideal social security system would be: to enable everyone to play a part in society, rather than simply to survive — 'to be able to make choices and lead independent lives' — and to respect the dignity of those claiming benefits.

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TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

EDUCATION TECHNICIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Education Technician to work under the direction of the Central Office Education Department, at the TGWU Central Office, in Westminster.

The successful applicant would be based at Transport House but would be required to work from other locations. The salary associated with this position will be **£185.58 per week** (exclusive of London Weighting).

Applicants must be conversant with the Rules and Administration of our Union and be capable of:
Preparing educational material on industrial, political and legal matters;
Co-ordinating training courses over a wide range of subjects;
Organising and conducting lectures and training courses;
Operating various visual aids, e.g. film projector, slide projector, OHP and video recording and filming equipment;
Developing and organising company financed and union courses;
Liaising with company representatives and National Officers in the preparation of course curricula and specialist course material.

Applicants should possess:
A general knowledge of Social/Industrial legislation and related matters;
A general knowledge of economics;
Be capable of assisting generally in the work of the Research and Education Department;
Be prepared to undertake work in other Regions and at the Union's Summer School when required.

Whilst the successful applicant will need to act on their own initiative, they will work under the direction of the Officers of the Central Office Education Department.

Applications, in writing, to reach me no later than **Wednesday, 11 March 1987: R. E. H. Collins, Administrative Officer, Ref: Education Technician, Transport and General Workers Union, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 3JB.**

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

TWO MEDIA ASSISTANTS

are required to work in the Central Office of the Transport and General Workers Union in Westminster under the direction of the General Secretary. The posts have been sanctioned for a 12-month period in order to assist in the launch of a major campaign that the union is organising on temporary workers.

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons who have experience of reporting the industrial and general news of trade unions. An ability to take accurate shorthand notes at meetings, to interview trade union officials and activists, and to translate technical information into popular and readable terms, is essential to the job, and eligibility for the **National Union of Journalists** membership would be an advantage.

The successful applicant will, of course, have primarily media transmission responsibilities and should be fully conversant on all aspects of media relations. She/he will work generally under the supervision of the General Secretary, liaising with Central Office heads of departments, where appropriate.

The salary range is from **£11,467.04** to **£12,988.56 p.a. (plus LVs)**. Holiday entitlement will be 26 days p.a., and working hours will be 8.55 a.m. to 4.55 p.m.

Applications, in writing, with full CV to reach me no later than **Wednesday 11 March 1987: R. E. H. Collins, Administrative Officer, Ref: Media Assistants, Transport and General Workers Union, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 3JB.**

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It's 'hunt the hard left'

Nothing has happened* within *Greenwich to undermine Deirdre Wood's standing with her local party, argues* SARAH BENTON, *who has been on the stump watching the candidates. It's the 'loony left' scaremongering which has been wrong-footing Labour onto the defensive

Andrew Wiard/Report

Dear old Deirdre – good old gut politics mistaken for dogma

DEIRDRE WOOD looked at home. Sat on a low chair, cup of tea in hand, overlooked by a large picture of fond Fergie and Andrew, she talked of her troubles to the small circle of old ladies. They clucked and tutted in sympathy as she spoke of the press intrusion in her private life, her public branding as a left-wing maniac. Still, she was bearing up well. Within the sheltered accommodation of Greenwich's Wentworth House she could do what she liked best: 'Chatting — the campaign gives me the chance to chat.'

The old women looked a little bewildered, unsure of their role in this national melodrama; but joined in vigorously when Deirdre led them through a half-hour discussion on different types of alarm system for old people. Then her time was up. Reluctantly putting down her cup, brushing off the crumbs from the biscuit she'd begged photographers not to record, she walked off to her next engagement.

This was a debacle. Wedged on a narrow pavement between street barrier and school gate, hemmed in by a daunting palisade of microphones, cameras and TV personnel, she had no chance to project herself as a real warm human being — currently the chief aim of her campaign. As the candidate and overwhelming media retinue which constitute a by-election took up position, the parents drew their children to them, stared suspiciously back, and hurried them off through another exit. Someone should have told the Labour Party that ambushing busy parents in their rush-hour of getting small children home and the tea on is not a good public relations ploy.

Even Deirdre's harshest enemies — and she has made a good few in her progress through the Greater London Council as Greenwich's councillor and the Inner London Education Authority as chair of the staff committee — don't cast aspersions on her ability to achieve a rapport with 'ordinary working people'. Here she is what she seems to be: an overweight, midded-aged mother of four, unbrushed by the glamorous sophistication of those used to the media, who has a genuine feel for the humdrum problems of common humanity. It is profoundly unlikely that she has strong views on Palestine and Sinn Fein; but she is credited with a 'gut' anger about poverty and low wages. For such reasons, the strategy, if that's not too sophisticated a notion, of her campaign, to show the real person behind the media image, makes sense.

The irony of this by-election is that its entire dynamic is the exposure of the strongly held, hard left views of Deirdre Wood, the 'real' Deirdre as the *Daily Mail* has it. Yet while she has certainly supported twinning London schools with Palestinian camps, talks with Sinn Fein, and ended up in the John McDonnell camp on rate-capping, her views on politics appear to be matters of instinct and expediency rather than of planned hard-left engineering.

As one of her opponents in the Labour Party said: 'She's a local militant in the old-fashioned sense of the word.' She has no history in the sectarian groups of the Labour Party but, like many an aspiring MP before her, she has gone the way of her local party. Like many constituency parties, Greenwich is run by younger, radical activists who want, above all, an MP whose loyalty and voting record is rooted in them.

PERHAPS the Labour supporters of South East London have particular reason for wanting to knot the local tie. Erith and Crayford in the neighbouring borough of Bexley lost its Labour MP James Wellbeloved to the SDP in 1981. Adjacent Woolwich lost Christopher Mayhew to the Liberals in 1974 and his successor, John Cartwright, to the SDP. Greenwich's own last Labour MP but one, Richard Marsh, flapped off to the Lords to nestle on the Tory benches. All that and the historic defection of working-class champions, the Woolwich Arsenal football club, to Highbury, too.

Those in the Labour camp who fear that Deirdre Wood may lose the contest are now muttering darkly about Labour changing its procedure for selecting by-election candidates who become, in the concentrated glare, symbols of the national party. Why could they not have chosen a Nick Rainsford, victor at Fulham, whose personal and political past and uncomplicated middle-class status stood up impeccably to *News of the World* probes (Deirdre's own class status being ambiguous).

If there was a mistake — and, learning from Michael Foot's denunciation of Peter Tatchell, Kinnock was quick to embrace Ms Wood — it was the Labour leadership's. In hastily moving the writ for the election, they refused to consider that the constituency party might choose someone so vulnerable to a 'hunt the hard left' campaign. The hare of 'terrible Deirdre' was let out (not from Kinnock's office) and it ran; by the time the selection was made, it could not be put back. Yet those who started it were sadly out of touch with the local party, its history and political preoccupations if they believed that the values of top London circles must prevail. When Guy Barnett stood for re-selection last time, Ms Wood came within a handful of votes of beating him. Nothing has happened since then to undermine her standing with the party.

The effect of letting the hunt-the-left hare run for so long has been to leave Labour's campaign wholly on the defensive; a missed opportunity given local views of the Conservative government's record and their surprisingly weak candidate. For if Deirdre Wood is cast as a symbol of her party, so might John Antcliffe, a privately educated manager in the corporate finance department of NM Rothschild, be of his. At 25 (an

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PETER KELLNER

Polls, damned polls and the battle for Greenwich

IT WAS BOUND to happen. At some point the transition would take place. Instead of polls being used to dissect by-elections, a by-election would be used to dissect the polls. If there was a moment when that transition could be witnessed, it was in Greenwich last Friday when the Minister of State for Education, Angela Rumbold, came close to fisticuffs with the Broadcaster of State for By-elections, Vincent Hanna.

Hanna's crime, in the eyes of the Minister, was to broadcast the findings of an opinion poll which showed the SDP's candidate, Rosie Barnes, firmly established in second place only 12 points behind labour's Deirdre Wood, with the Conservatives trailing third. Mrs Rumbold described Hanna's poll, for BBC2's *Newsnight*, as 'a little dodgy' and added for good measure that it had been conducted by a Liberal councillor.

A Minister of Education, of all people, ought to do her homework. Mrs Rumbold was talking rot on both counts. The Liberal councillor in question was David Woodhead. He is a lecturer at the Thames Polytechnic. He did not conduct the *Newsnight* poll. He simply helped to select some of the students who conducted the fieldwork for *Newsnight*'s original poll. He played no part in designing the questionnaire or analysing the answers for that poll. He had nothing at all to do with the second, 'dodgy' poll: this was conducted by 12 students recruited directly by *Newsnight*.

Mrs Rumbold's other point was more serious: what faith can we place in a sample of only 270 electors, polled by telephone! Surely polls that wish to be taken seriously should be conducted face-to-face and with much larger samples?

Mrs Rumbold would have been right had *Newsnight*'s sample consisted of 270 electors plucked from the telephone directory. Samples drawn from telephone users are biased towards the better-off; the minority without telephones are far more likely than the rest of the electorate to be poor and to vote Labour. (In other words, if Mrs Rumbold's claim was valid, *Newsnight* would have been guilty of *overestimating* Conservative support.) At the last general election, the one poll organisation that conducted nationwide surveys by telephone, Audience Selection, produced the worst prediction of the result.

BUT THAT is not how Hanna did his poll. His original sample of 671 was assembled by conventional methods and interviewed face-to-face. This is a normal sample size for by-election surveys. Interviews were conducted on 1-2 February and produced *Newsnight*'s original estimate of the state of the parties: Labour 48 per cent, Conservatives 26, SDP 24, others 2.

It was the next stage in Hanna's operation that caused all the fuss. 270 of *Newsnight*'s original sample were re-interviewed a week later. Their views were compared with what they had said on the first occasion. The biggest movement was from Labour to Alliance. Of the 128 round-one Labour supporters who were re-interviewed, ten had switched to the SDP. By analysing these (and other) changes, Hanna produced his updated estimate early last week: Labour 43 per cent, SDP 31, Conservatives 25.

Far from condemning Hanna for his methods, those who want seriously to know how opinion has shifted should congratulate him. If two completely different samples of voters produce different figures, it is hard to be certain whether opinions have changed or whether the difference is explained by sampling variations. But when the *same* people are re-interviewed, any change is real. The fact that the re-interviews are done by telephone is largely irrelevant, so long as the *original* sample was an accurate reflection of the population as a whole.

> ***'A minister of education ought to do her homework. Mrs Rumbold was talking rot'***

Nor should Hanna be criticised for returning to just 270 electors. Statistically, a group of voters who are *re-interviewed* is as reliable as a *fresh* sample three times as large, since you're more certain of the original political complexion of your sample than you can be with a new selection of people. So, the sampling error on *Newsnight*'s second survey was roughly the same as if Hanna had organised a fresh survey of 800 electors.

Historically, re-interviews have provided some of the best estimates of public opinion. In the 1970 general election campaign, all the polls bar one predicted a Labour victory. The poll that got it right was conducted by the Opinion Research Centre (forerunner of today's Harris Research Centre). On the eve of polling day ORC re-interviewed 257 people from an earlier, large sample. They found that 14 people had switched from Labour to Conservative, while only one had switched in the opposite direction. On the basis of these figures, ORC predicted Heath's victory.

IN NORMAL TIMES all this would matter little. By-election polls conducted almost three weeks before polling day are normally interesting for a few days to a few people, and then forgotten. Greenwich is different. Apart from Truro, which will not tell us much about the national mood, Greenwich is the last by-election to be held before Mrs Thatcher has to decide whether to hold an early general election.

It is not too fanciful to imagine the following sequence of events: *Newsnight* poll shows the SDP firmly in second place in Greenwich; this causes the Tory vote to be squeezed, and leads to 'shock' SDP by-election win; the publicity from this victory boosts the Alliance's nationwide standing; the Tories enter the spring local elections with their standing down to 35 per cent; the Tories lose hundreds of seats in those elections, and the Alliance makes sweeping gains; faced with a resurgent Alliance vote, Mrs Thatcher is forced to delay the election until the autumn at the earliest; when the election is eventually held, the Alliance gains dozens of seats from the Tories and holds the balance of power; the Tories blame Vincent Hanna for their misfortunes; if it had not been for his wretched telephone re-interviews, none of this would have happened.

Last weekend's Harris poll for the *London Daily News* (to be launched next week) appears to support Tory claims that the *Newsnight* poll is wrong. Harris found voting intentions in Greenwich to be distributed as follows: Labour 48 per cent, SDP 26, Conservatives 25. No sign there of the Tory or Labour vote crumbling to the SDP. Indeed, if both Hanna's and Harris's polls are right, there was a sharp swing back from the SDP to Labour in the first full week of campaigning.

There are, however, two important differences between the polls. The first relates to their sample design. In order to get the right social mix, both polls told their interviewers how many council tenants, how many owner occupiers and how many private tenants to speak to. It seems that Harris's quotas were set too high for council tenants (51 per cent instead of 45 per cent), and too low for owner occupiers (35 per cent instead of 39). I have recalculated Harris's figures according to Greenwich council's own 1986 estimate of housing tenure in the constituency. When this adjustment is made, Harris's figures change to: Labour 45 per cent, SDP 27, Tories 27. There is still no clear indication that the SDP are running second, but the figures are now similar to *Newsnight*'s.

The second difference between the two polls concerns those people who did *not* offer Harris a voting intention. They amounted to no less than 31 per cent of Harris's sample. In *Newsnight*'s original sample they amounted to only 8 per cent. Traditionally the Alliance vote is the least committed. The more pollsters manage to squeeze those who are inclined to say 'don't know' and entice them to name a party, the more likely these reluctant electors are to say 'Alliance'.

Had Harris managed to squeeze its 31 per cent of don't knows and won't says, its Alliance figure would certainly have been higher and its Tory and Labour ratings would have been lower. Its end result would have been close to *Newsnight*'s.

Conversely, Harris could argue that its 31 per cent residual is more realistic. Turnouts in by-elections are usually well down on those in general elections; therefore to squeeze doubtful electors is to provide a spurious reading, for it means including the loyalties of people who won't vote anyway.

Which is right? Both *Newsnight* and Harris are planning to interview fresh samples in Greenwich during the next few days. The closer we get to polling day, the easier it will be to test the pollsters' findings against the final result. A modest suggestion to both *Newsnight* and *Harris*: why not agree on your Greenwich housing figures before you enter the final lap? □

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The Group dismisses 'Big Bang' solutions to social security reform, preferring to 'build on the best elements of the present system rather than start from scratch'. But as soon as it tries to list what the 'building blocks' of such a programme might be, it reveals the uncertainties and obstacles which make mobilising public opinion so difficult.

It's refreshing to see a pressure group admit 'we cannot claim to have all the answers at this stage', but surely it of all organisations should have decided by now whether taxing child benefit is a good idea or not.

Nor is it enough to attack the present levels of benefit as too low, while saying 'research is needed' into what level they should be. The excellent book by Joanna Mack and Stewart lansley, *Poor Britain* (Allen and Unwin, 1985), provided a way to calculate what a 'participation' standard of living might be. It suggests that a level 50 per cent higher than the current supplementary benefit level would provide people with what a majority in Britain see as necessities — things that 'everyone in this country should not have to do without', based on opinion poll findings.

When it comes to paying for this substantial increase, take a close look next month at all the tax reliefs and allowances in the Budget which mean that people on the highest income avoid paying tax at the top 60 per cent rate. Is 60 per cent of anything over £45,000 a year really too much?

John Rentoul

Prague power-struggle

THE VISIT of Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Prague two weeks ago appears to have been taken as a signal by leading members of the Czechoslovak Presidium (politburo). For over a decade the main candidates to succeed President Gustav Husak have been hiding behind a facade of unity, but as the President ails and the winds of reform blow in from Moscow this unity is rapidly revealing itself to be a chimera.

Prime Minister Lubomir Strougal, the only contender capable of arousing sympathy among liberals and progressives, began the sparring two days before Shevardnadze's arrival with a blistering attack on the petrified economic mechanism which has attracted much criticism from the Soviet leadership in the past year. A week later the grand old man of Czechoslovak neo-Stalinism, Vasil Bilak, felt compelled to reply. 'There are some people among us agitating for a "New Politics",' he said. 'They want to exploit the changes going on in the Soviet Union in order to conceal their anti-socialist and anti-people's activity,' he added.

Although Bilak still wields considerable influence in the party, his age and his isolation within the Presidium will count against him. The President is believed to favour Jozef Lenart, the first secretary of the Slovak communist party, as his successor. Husak's life-work has been the promotion of the Slovak influence in Prague, and the Slovaks are greatly worried that if a Czech were to become party chief then they would suffer political discrimination.

As Strougal and Bilak battle it out in public, the great power seeker in the Presidium, Milos Jakes, prefers to cultivate contacts within the Soviet Union. Among party members and dissidents alike Jakes is considered the most unscrupulous political thug. He warmly applauds the economic reforms being carried out in the Soviet Union, but in the past six months has been blocking similar programmes in the Presidium introduced by Strougal because he is not their author.

Since martial law in Poland, much of Eastern Europe has stagnated politically. However, the fact that in Prague, the totem of the Brezhnevite era in Eastern Europe, there is at last evidence of some political activity, suggests that Gorbachev's influence is extending beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.

Misha Glenny

If the caption fits

No 6

The non-competitive humour group has reported several of your entries for no 4 (below) to the Press Council. Remember, please, when you supply captions or bubbles for Cynthia Payne (above), that we puritans of the left have weak stomachs. Entries to reach us by Tuesday 3 March for exposure on Page Six on 6 March and a £10 book token.

No 4: winner

'And here I have a Cabinet Minister which I prepared earlier' (*Boyd Taylor, Edinburgh*).

GREENWICH *Cont'd from p.6*

age when you have little to boast of as your 'past achievement' but your 'O' levels — nine) he is heartily for private schools, more privatisation and having a 'young and energetic' MP, viz himself.

What his politics are, over and above that, he's not letting on. And nor was his fellow canvasser Jeffrey Archer, for whom three hours in Greenwich on a cold February morning is probably the rehabilitative equivalent of Profumo's years of East End toil. He served his time with as much grace as he could muster, his face set on a loop of flashing smiles and archly raised eyebrows, his tongue on an apparently random series of responses, regardless of who was saying what: 'Work hard', 'we'll win', 'we're going to beat her m'dear', 'well spotted', 'good boy', 'that's right m'dear', and even, improbably 'sleep well'.

Thus his 'ha ha quite right' offered to an old woman who muttered fiercely 'stop your rotten gays and lesbians' should not be taken as his carefully thought out comment on homosexual rights or the sex life of his own dear party. This week, Lord Marsh and the rather more unstable prize of Neville Sandelson (from Labour to SDP to Tory) will urge Greenwich citizens to vote Tory with the unique ardour of the anti-left convert.

THE ALLIANCE is also banking on the keep-the-hard-left-out factor. This SDP pursuit of the unspeakable extreme sits oddly with nice Rosie Barnes' earnest protestations of political decency. But if she feels uncomfortable at jumping on Normal Tebbit's bandwagon, she's dextrous enough to avoid being tripped into disagreeing with David Own, whose contribution to her campaign so far has been to whip his wagon in front of Tebbit's: 'the record of the Labour candidate indicates clearly that were she elected she would be part of the "lethal" not the "Loony" left.'

What else the SDP stands for in Greenwich is not clear. They are against heavy lorries, like the loony GLC, and, thank goodness, against crime, and in favour of decentralised local authorities. Except where they might make their own decisions and cause 'local anomalies', as in industrial rates, in which case they are all in favour of strong centralisation. But mainly Rosie Barnes is in favour of 'common sense, you can't say fairer than that'.

To one shopper she is against 'these fringe things' and *for* all the effort going into mainstream housing and social services; with another, she shares concern about how to involve black people, gays and lesbians more in local politics. This sound less like opportunism than the tendency of all candidates to agree with the last thing that is said to them.

Yet whether Ms Barnes's self-presentation — the person of common sense, uncorrupted by party politics — can resist the driving force of modern politics to harry the left out of the British political spectrum is highly doubtful.

Meanwhile the campaign of Kate Marshall, candidate of the Revolutionary Communist Party which really does have worked-out policies on Ireland and racism which are an 'extreme' challenge to the British state, is tolerated as part of that great British tradition of political eccentricity and freedom. □

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BEIRUT

The uncostly war

Hostages are hard currency in Beirut.
JAMIL NASSER, ***a former resident of Beirut and himself a kidnap victim, reports on the disintegration of a city***

THERE IS a feeling that Western diplomats and negotiators have failed to understand the 'rules of the game' in the hostage crisis in Beirut. In some respects that is true, although the game remains one of the oldest between adversaries: war. But it is a silent and inexpensive kind of war, with little cost in human life.

Lebanon is the political theatre between countries like the United States and Israel, on the one hand, and on the other, the religious and ideological groups that suffered devastation at their hands in 1982-84. In the West, that era of Lebanon's history has long been forgotten, but for the thousands that suffered violent shelling, massacre and starvation, it is not healed. The wounds still hurt, and vengeance is theirs.

It is a mistake not to see war in the Beirut hostage issue. This war began in 1982 and continues to this day. After the Israeli invasion, European and American 'peace-keeping' forces imposed a *modus vivendi* in Lebanon that ignored the political aspirations and grievances of the majority of the population. In so doing, they declared war against that population. Resistance soon emerged against this one-sided peace in the form of anti-government graffiti in West Beirut, bomb attacks on the Lebanese army and dynamite sticks on empty street corners. The writing was on the wall, but nobody could read Arabic. This opposition culminated in the suicide attack on the French and American marine barracks a few weeks later.

By then, various political and ideological groups in Lebanon had declared outright war against the multinational force, comprising British, French and Italian kidnapping their nationals. It was a war that the western states could not respond to, for it was a war where the enemy remained hidden, mysterious and unseen. It was also a war in which traditional gunboat diplomacy was ineffective. It was a war of attrition, persistently sustained on the antagonist's own turf and on his own terms.

The first kidnapping which took place was of an American professor, Frank Regier, in February 1984. Simultaneously, a piece of paper was glued to the entrance of the American University of Beirut, the most apparent and unprotected American symbol in Lebanon, denouncing the American shelling of the Druze mountains. Later a Frenchman was kidnapped, and the process has sadly continued.

The violent 'peace' that was politically and militarily imposed in 1982 backfired: the communities that had suffered began to hit back — the Shiites, the Sunnis, even a Christian communist group who kidnapped the French cultural attaché in Tripoli and held him for a few weeks. All shared scars of massacre, siege, expulsion and indiscriminate shelling. They declared war in the only means possible: to kidnap a hostage was to throw a bomb at the enemy and undertake an act of military defiance. The words of the Iranian delegate to the United Nations on 2 February cannot be dismissed as mere oriental rhetoric: 'The Lebanese', he said, 'want their outcry to be heard. They want to fight back.'

Rex Features

'All Lebanon is kidnapped', said the Sunni Mufti, 'but the world does not care'

Political hostages

Such a statement raises the question: why are innocent individuals kidnapped, especially when they remain in Beirut to continue a mission of education or technical instruction, against their government's advice?

The answer is cruel but obvious: they are the only pawns left in the city. When hostages from the 'outside' can be captured, they are — the TWA flight hijacked to Beirut in the summer of 1985, is a case in point. Those hostages were released only after the Israelis agreed to free Lebanese and Palestinian fighters held in their prisons, against the Geneva Convention.

The demands by the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, apropos the kidnapping of four foreigners from the Beirut University campus in January 1987, are exactly the same. Hostages are needed for a political purpose, and if they happen to be accessible in Beirut, so much the better. West Beirut is only 14 square miles, and it would be difficult for a foreigner not to have his domicile known. A student can walk with him to his apartment, the friendly concierge can tell. He is valuable for bargains and negotiations and he is easily taken prisoner. No risk is involved in this.

The victims are, of course, innocent. They are innocent in two senses of the word: first that they have not harmed anybody. But then so are the thousands of Lebanese Moslems, Christians, Armenians, Jews and Palestinians who have been mercilessly killed because they were in the right place at the wrong time. 'All Lebanon is kidnapped', announced the Sunni Mufti after his last meeting with Mr Terry Waite, 'but the world does not care'. With the hostages, the world is

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forced to care about a situation for which it is partly to blame. The hostages are the wages of their nations' original sin, and in Beirut, the price of sin is heavy. That is why Beirut's violence has become proverbial.

The hostages are also 'innocents abroad' in that they do not recognise that they are symbols of the states to which they belong. They are not individuals but flags. Instead of being burned, they are incarcerated. And when their states conduct air-raids and military campaigns, innocent or not, they are made to pay.

THIS LEADS to the role of Arab and Islamic countries in this hostage crisis. It is evident in the statement by the captors of the French television crew that the Christmas release of one of the victims was the result of negotiations between France on the one hand, and Iran and Syria on the other. Indeed, Barbara Walters's December 1986 interview on ABC with the Iranian arms dealer Ghorbifar revealed that the latter played an instrumental role in mediating the release of Americans held in Beirut. His explanation of his role was very precise: the Shiites in Lebanon have found in their Iranian co-religionists financial and moral support and therefore have been willing to co-operate with them.

It should not be forgotten that after the 1982 invasion, Iran sent hundreds of physicians, nurses, teachers, and religious guides to the predominantly Shiite Bekaa valley where they provided essential medical and educational services in areas long ignored by government development and construction (Farsi, the Iranians' tongue, is now the second language in the Bekaa). Thus, in Iran's conflict with the hostage nations, mutually beneficial co-operation grew between the kidnappers who have their own grievances to address, and the Iranians who alone extended help to them in their time of need.

The same applies to the Sunnite organisations which have lately appeared on the hostage scene. They also co-operate with Arab countries, such as Libya, that support their political aspirations and their endurance of the most devastating economic crisis in the history of modern Lebanon. Doubtless, financial aid is helping a large section of the population from Lebanon ward off starvation. (In the summer of 1986, a man from Tripoli offered to sell some of his children in order to keep the rest of his family alive).

TO RELEASE a hostage, it is necessary to identify the group and the country that supports that group. There is no single country in the region that alone can wield pressure on all the groups: indeed, different political groups of the same country have been known to patronise differing Beirut groups. These groups, interact with each other and exchange information: but each has its own hierarchy, its own allegiance and each guards its hostages dearly.

To go to one group and seek the release of a hostage held by another is futile and can be dangerous. Indeed, when French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac thanked the Lebanese President and the PLO Chairman for their co-operation in mediating the release of French hostage Cornea, the organisation which had held him angrily protested. (*An-Nahhar*, 31 December 1986). No group infringes the hostage rights of another.

In their war against the outside enemy, these groups will do with their hostages what best serves their interests: whether it be demands for political moderation in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the release of fighters from Israeli prisons, the purchase of arms and spare parts, or the freeing of assets in Western banks. It is a war without arms.

Economic hostages

This raises another question about the hostages who do not belong to countries at war with Lebanon, or whose kidnapping was never claimed for any political or ideological purpose. The clue to their plight remains speculative, but it is probably a matter of money.

Over a year ago a Korean diplomat was kidnapped and $10m. demanded in ransom. In December 1986, the son of a wealthy Sunni Beirut merchant was kidnapped and $75,000 demanded (the shift to dollar was a result of the dizzying fall of the Lebanese currency). The serious economic crisis is being resolved by kidnapping the wealthy and the politically unattached. And who is wealthier than a Westerner, innocently strolling the once chic area of Ras Beirut?

It is thus possible to see some of those who have been kidnapped in Beirut, whether Lebanese, Saudi Arabian, British or American as falling into the hands of ransom seekers. If they are Lebanese, the ransom these days is running between $10,000 and $50,000. Or they could be exchanged for other kidnap victims held on the 'other side'. If they are poor and unexchangeable, they are left to disintegrate, never to be seen again. But if they are foreign, then they are 'pickled' — kept in a sunless underground vault, blindfolded and moved around in car trunks from one Beirut location to another. This would explain the case of the French school teacher who was kidnapped from Hamra street by the 'Hitteen Organisation' in April 1986, only to be accidentally freed by Syrian forces . . . in the Bekaa valley. (Rumour had it that he had been kidnapped by a drug-dealing clan, one of whose members had been arrested at Orly Airport.)

The hostage is 'pickled' until the appropriate payment is made, if not by the kidnapped person's own nation, then by another nation which might find itself at war with his nation. This conflict might be occurring in the present, or it might arise while the hostage is being 'pickled'. It does not matter, for it does not cost more than 25 cents a day to keep a human body alive, especially if American dollars are expected at its release. The body will be locked up with sufficient nutrition for its flesh, until the highest bidder appears on the market. Then it will either be freed or made to pay for the sins of its country. In both cases, the dollar, not the Lebanese currency counts.

And as it crouches in a cell, a foetus in a cement womb, awaiting birth or the bullet — the war goes on. □

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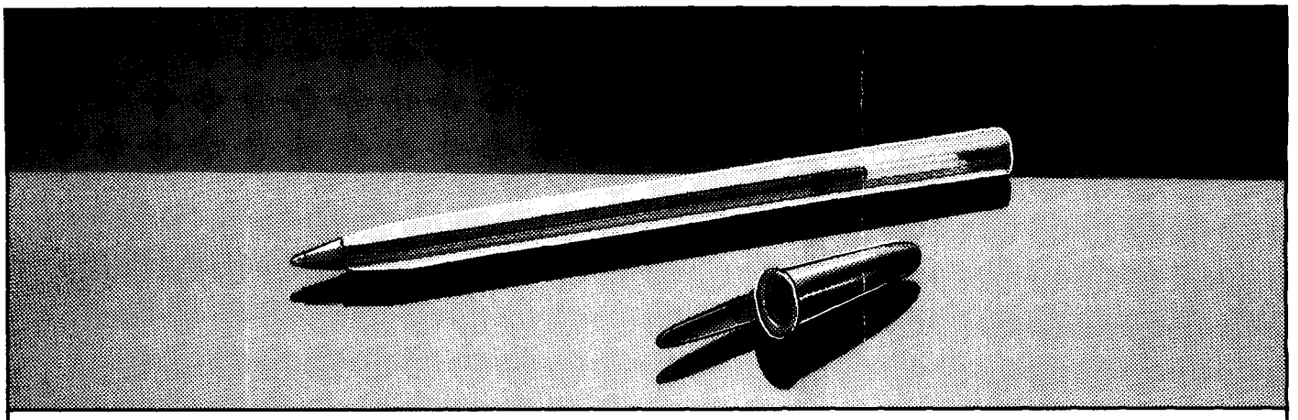

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Schedule for scandal

In America, Wall Street quivers in its boots as famous City names are hauled before the courts. In Britain, there's masterly inactivity, and the prospect of more of the same.

PATRICK FORBES *reports*

CHANNON MUST GO. Prevented from saying anything about Guinness by his family connections, reluctant to force the pace in other cases, facing a tidal wave of difficult legislation, a firmer hand is needed at the Department of Trade's rudder before the rush of events in our City calendar sweeps away the Secretary of State.

Paul Channon's diary is disappointingly blank for one who is charged with policing the City. Compared with America where new names are daily hauled before the courts, only one case is set for trial in Britain — that of Geoffrey Collier, late of merchant bank Morgan Grenfell, to appear next Monday at Wimbledon Magistrates Court on three charges of insider dealing. The Exco case, where local authorities were alleged to have been defrauded (*NS* 19/26 December 1986) is now in the hands of the Audit Commission. But proof of corruption of officials is hard to find, and the Commission, baulked over the lack of evidence in bank accounts, is now looking for any changes in suspects' lifestyles. The DTI inspectors have just reported on the British & Commonwealth case, but one source close to the inquiry admitted: 'It's a 3s and 6d affair'. Guinness-revelations pour into the press, but the inspectors are hampered by the sheer scale of the affair.

However, as City referee, Channon faces a fixture list littered with hard decisions. In mid-April a match between the fledgling Securities and Investment Board (SIB) and the City beckons. Recidivist financiers are now baulking at the prospect of SIB. 'They've gone too far. Frankly people have less to fear from a socialist Secretary of State, than from an interventionist SIB' volunteered one of the City's more powerful chairmen last week. The omens are not good for Sir Kenneth Berrill, chairman of SIB, holding on to his job.

Still, the SIB should be in motion by mid-summer — a chief constable, responsible for policing all those areas of the financial world not already under the tutelage of the Bank of England, or the Council of Lloyd's. Last week Sir Kenneth announced that SIB was submitting its weighty (430-page) rule book for the approval of the Secretary of State for Trade, and the Director of the Office of Fair Trading. Once approved — and the pressure is on for approval before Parliament goes into recess at Easter — the rules can be laid before Parliament. If only for electoral reasons, neither Channon, nor Mrs T can then allow themselves to be seen going either soft or slow.

In drawing up the rules SIB has managed to raise the hackles of just about every part of the City, and compounded the irritation by submitting them before a series of disputes has been resolved. In particular, the banks are incensed by 'polarisation', SIB's proposal that either they market only their own investment products, or run a general investment advice service, but not *both* — unless their products are provably the best on offer.

The British Bankers Association insist their members are 'cross, very cross indeed — and intend to take the whole matter to the Secretary of State'. Meanwhile SIB and Berrill are equally adamant: 'We have the backing of the Consumers' Association, it is a fair measure . . .' Channon will be aware that should he let the banks win, Berrill will have to resign. Sir Kenneth has already been forced into an embarrassing climbdown over another dispute, when dealers in financial futures insisted they be grouped with stockbrokers under the new rules, rather than their less sweet-smelling cousins, commodity brokers — as SIB wanted. Significantly, according to sources, it was a direct approach to Channon that swung the debate the dealers' way; 'I didn't realise until recently that Berrill is a bully, and all you have to do is bully him back,' said one chairman. Against the embarrassment that Berrill's resignation will cause, Channon will balance the (private) applause of a City alarmed by Berrill's straightforward approach to City regulation — it will be a near thing.

Easy option

Then there's Lloyd's. There will be two dates pencilled in red in the Lloyd's chairman's filofax — 30 June this year; 22 January next year. Channon has given Lloyd's a year to get its house in order, and implement all the reforms that the Neill Committee recommended this January. Lloyd's accepted Neill's report with a sigh of relief: 'Neill boosts Corporation' ran the headline on Lloyd's staff newspaper. No legislation had been recommended, no far-reaching reforms suggested; as one broker put it to me, 'Neill took *every* easy option.' But his report does have one lingering timebomb; in bringing Lloyd's regulation up to scratch with the rest of the City, it creates the possibility that regulation of Lloyd's could be removed from Lloyd's council, and handed over to Berrill's SIB.

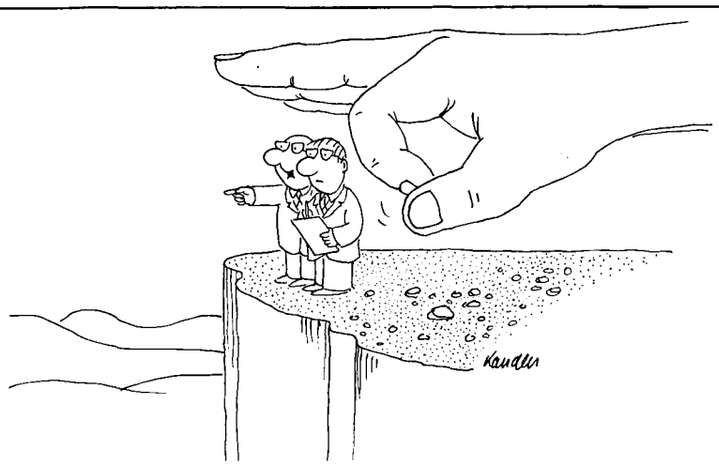
Lloyd's boasts its close connections with Channon: 'The government are aware of our plans . . . the chairman and chief executive went to see the Secretary of State the day before Neill was published.' But a Secretary of State less attuned to the City's whim might be unimpressed by the Council's attempts to get to grips with the aftermath of the Pearson Cameron Webb (PCW) scandal.

30 June is the solvency deadline for Lloyd's names (investors in underwriting syndicates) — all must pass. Lloyd's chairman, Peter Miller, will be uneasily aware that last year's holding operation for the PCW 'names' (where £235 million was committed to Lloyd's central fund on their behalf) cannot be repeated. The pressure is now on Lloyd's to come up with a workable offer to those names. Lloyd's insists such an offer is just around the corner: 'It is a matter of weeks rather than months.' Others are less sure; 'There's been a lot of huffing and puffing, but no sign of any money on the table', says Christopher Crosthwaite, solicitor to the names. Crosthwaite's scepticism is shared by anyone close to the negotiations. The two sides are still arguing over the fine print, money has yet to be discussed. Should Lloyd's fail to sort out the mess, progress on implementing Neill's limited reforms may not count in the balance.

By mid-June (at the latest) bankers should be able to while away those long summer evenings contemplating the Banking Act 1987 — the legislative relic of the Johnson Matthey scandal of fond memory. The Bill has just gone through all its readings in the Commons and is now to be mulled over by their lordships. The intent was to plug the holes revealed in the Bank of England's system of banking supervision.

Rather than countenance any radical reform — e.g. changing the Bank's passive approach to supervision, or indeed wresting control of banking supervision from the Bank — the Bill concentrates on weak-kneed instructions to auditors to report on *particular* aspects of a client's business (without any *specific* duties of disclosure, says the *Law Society Gazette*), the reporting by banks of any particularly large loans they have made, and the abolition of the arbitrary two-tier structure where banks were divided between banks proper and lowlier licensed deposit takers.

Here was a chance for Channon to assert his authority, and remove banking supervision from the Bank, placing it either with SIB or with a freestanding authority (as in most other countries). It is a move that for all the City's antipathy to SIB would find favour with some: 'The Bank of England — they're not in the twentieth century,' said one senior official last week. But again the buck has passed. □



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ECONOMICS

The secret sins of the City

Clive Wolman

THE CITY SCANDALS which have come to light in the last four months — insider dealing and share rigging during takeovers in general, the £2.5bn Guinness takeover of Distillers in particular — might yet become an electoral liability for the Conservative government. But they have left the Labour opposition floundering.

Labour spokesperson and MPs have produced little more than generalised abuse about City fraud and inflated City earnings, mixed with a few unrelated policy proposals which fail to get to grips with the underlying flaws in the UK's financial system.

Labour's main criticisms and policy proposals are:

- Insider dealing is a fraud on the community and offenders must be brought to justice with more vigour and severity.
- The Guinness affair highlights the evils of the contested mega-takeover bid. A Labour government will prevent such takeovers unless they are shown to be in the national interest.
- The new system of City regulation detailed in last year's Financial Services Act must be replaced by a statutory system.

The party's focus on the well-publicised wrongdoings of insider dealers have diverted attention away from the reasons that 'inside' information about publicly-quoted companies exists in the first place.

Insider dealing is rarely about the rich and overpaid taking advantage of the naive small investor. In fact, such an investor is generally a beneficiary of insider dealing, as it typically has the effect of pushing up a share price of a takeover target towards the big value before the bid is announced. This allows the small investor in such a potential takeover target, who is selling his shares with no inside information, to benefit from a higher price.

The underlying point is that inside information and insider dealing only exist because of non-disclosure by companies and their merchant bankers. The sole purpose of the stealth of a company preparing a takeover bit is to deprive stock market investors of information which would bost the price at which they buy and sell shares in the target company.

The most common victims of insider dealing, (if any) are those market-making firms, usually the subsidiaries of large financial conglomerates, which carry out deals with the insiders, usually without knowing who they are and without keeping a tight control on their own stock market positions.

As far as a company's financial performance is concerned, inside information would simply disappear if there were fuller and swifter disclosure. Why, for example, did the cables and computer company STC wait until July of last year to reveal 'a marked deterioration' in its trading performance which dated from February, thus creating a huge temptation for insiders to profit from selling its shares short?

The difficulty in applying this approach to a bidding company is to define *when* it should disclose its intentions. It would be impractical to require, say, Mr Robert Maxwell to disclose publicly every idea which passes through his fertile mind. But it would be quite possible for the regulatory authorities, in this case the Stock Exchange and the Takeover Panel, to be informed at an early stage that a bid is being considered. They then could decide when and in what form the information should be made public without misleading investors.

The insider dealing cases in both the City and Wall Street, together with the Guinness affair, have strengthened Labour prejudices against takeover battles. Clearly some proposed takeovers and mergers would operate against the public interest by restricting competition and consumer choice. But in contrast to the 'big is beautiful' takeover boom of the late 1960s, the takeovers of the last four years have been primarily about replacing bad management. In some cases that has meant breaking up conglomerates rather than putting them together.

> ***'The threat of takeovers has become the main mechanism for making managers accountable to their shareholders. Labour's profoundly conservative policy will remove that without replacing it. The main effect will be to entrench the existing managerial oligarchies'***

Despite their flaws and excesses, takeovers and the threat of takeovers have become the main, if not the sole, mechanism for disciplining the top managers of Britain's large companies and making them accountable to their pension fund and insurance company shareholders. Labour's profoundly conservative policy will remove that mechanism without replacing it with a better one. The main effect, therefore, will be to entrench the existing managerial oligarchies who for decades have run Britain's companies as their private fiefdoms while presiding over the long-term decline of British industry and its debilitating industrial relations problems.

The main defect of takeover battles is the enormous expenses that have to be paid to City institutions as advisers and underwriters. This points to the central flaw of the new City regulatory framework which Labour's parliamentary team have neglected in their concern to shift the new system away from 'self-regulation' towards 'statutory' regulation.

THE MOST CENTRAL issue in City regulation is, or should be, the pricing of financial services. It is only because of the high fees and the multifarious covert forms of remuneration from which City institutions benefit that they are able to pay such high salaries and bonuses to their key employees and, in the longer term, to make the financial sector unnecessarily large. A free market in financial services, which the UK has now achieved, can only work efficiently if its users have adequate information by which to evaluate the services.

The skill of a City institution is to identify situations in which huge amounts of money are changing hands or are at stake. It can then charge what seems like a tiny percentage fee, or better still what does not seem like a fee at all, for advising and assisting.

It is not difficult to persuade the outside users of financial services — companies, pension fund trustees or individual savers and investors — that its experience and network of contacts are essential for the job to be done effectively. Most companies wishing to raise capital, initiate or block a takeover or have their pension funds managed find it difficult to decide whether they are getting value for money for a service which is highly complex.

The problem starts with the humble insurance salesperson or bank manager who advises a customer to take an endowment mortgage to buy his home without ever disclosing that he will be paid typically £500 in commission for, perhaps, 30 minutes work. The charges on endowment policies, which pay for his commission, are so obscure that it is difficult for anyone to work out how high they are.

The obfuscation extends to the commissions and fees of the Lloyd's insurance market (compounded by its tax privileges), to the underwriting and advising on new share issues and takeover bids and right across the financial sector.

Take the example of the trustees of a left-wing local authority pension fund who believe they are taking a tough line by refusing to pay investment managers' fees. The truth is rather different. The City is still generously remunerated through stockbroking commissions and market-makers' turns, charges on overseas currency and share transactions, the foregoing of interest on money held on deposit and charges for the use of in-house unit trusts.

How much benefit do the pension funds reap from the expertise of investment managers and stockbroking analysts and all their buying and selling? All the performance measurement services show that even the most naive pension fund trustee could have made more money than at least 80 per cent of 'professional' managers by picking a portfolio of shares at random from the lists in the City pages of a newspaper.

The chief flaw in the Financial Services Act is the absence of a general requirement that all City institutions should make their charges and remuneration as transparent as possible, and should demonstrate what value they are adding (if any) in easily comparable and standardised terms. Whether the new Securities and Investments Board should become more explicitly a creature of statute, as Labour is demanding, is by contrast largely a symbolic issue. □

Clive Wolman is a correspondent of the Financial Times.

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Is Botha losing control?

***White South Africa goes to the polls on 6 May. As Botha's far-right and* verligte *reformist left crumble away from him anything, anything, could happen, says* PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK**

Johannesburg

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS gained a valuable insight into President P.W. Botha at a cocktail party for the foreign press corps in Cape Town during the 4 February parliamentary no-confidence debate. The 70-year-old President was in a volatile mood: he jabbed his finger at them, admonished, lectured, complained and finally blew his lid completely when asked by the correspondent of a respected British newspaper why — if he had difficulties talking to the ANC — did he not negotiate with Nelson Mandela, who was more accessible.

At one stage Botha threatened to fetch ANC president Oliver Tambo from Lusaka and bring him back to 'justice' in South Africa. A few hours earlier Botha used parliament as a platform to denigrate the head of the country's largest bank, Chris Ball of Barclays, saying it was being mentioned in 'leftist circles' that he had paid for a controversial advertisement calling for the unbanning of the ANC.

Even Nationalists shook their heads disapprovingly at what they saw as an ill-considered attack. It came during a rambling and largely incoherent speech in which Botha once again resurrected the discredited concept of 'city states' as his way of accommodating black political rights. Everywhere the euphemistic question was being asked: was the President losing control?

Some people have tried to explain Botha's increasingly irrational behaviour by analysing him as an ill-tempered and authoritarian individual. In fact, it smacks of an even deeper rot within the ruling National Party, of the arrogance which results from having been in power far too long. It was precisely this arrogance which enabled Botha to call an election at all, given his government's record of political and economic failures. And the only thing which makes the election interesting is that it could prove to be the party's undoing.

P. W. Botha — probably the most hated individual in the northern Transvaal

It would be a mistake simply to dismiss the election as a private game being played by white politicians. As long as the armed struggle or the ghetto revolt shows no sign of being able to topple the regime, the nuances within the white power elite are significant. It goes without saying that the real political struggle in the country is not in the white 'group areas', which contain the most politically illiterate, privileged and apathetic section of the community. For years this white electorate has provided the National Party with a spurious legitimacy, returning them to power with ever-increasing majorities, contributing to the illusion of democracy.

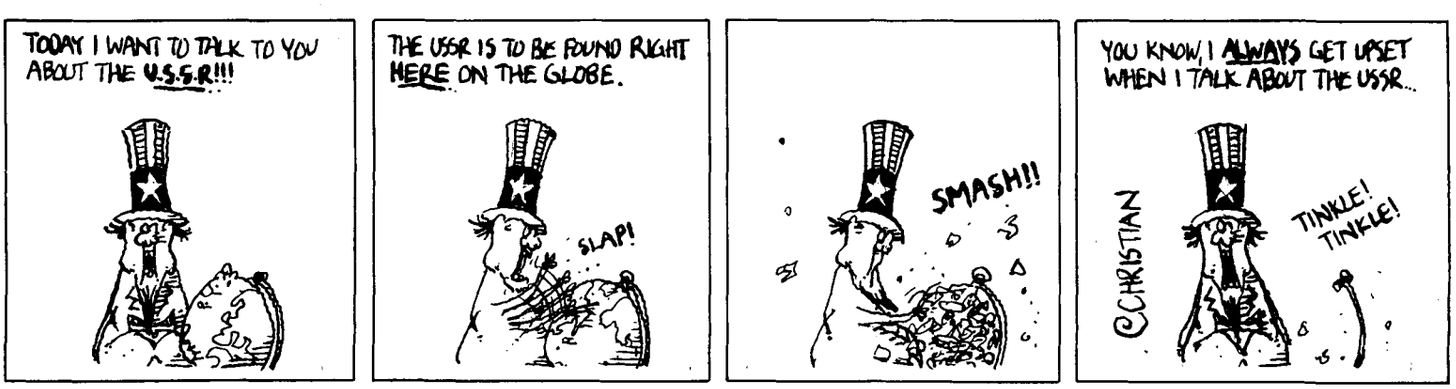
Botha has clearly gone in search of that legitimation again. Everything else has gone wrong. The rebellion in the black ghettoes, the collapse of the economy, the hostility of the international community, economic sanctions, the failure of reforms to apartheid to make any difference and the unwillingness of even 'moderate' blacks to be seen talking to the government is an unenviable record. The regime has held the line against the rebellion, but through a brutal State of Emergency which has required putting thousands of political opponents behind bars.

Now Botha, nearing the end of a 50-year-long political career, is turning back to his own people for affirmation — only to find that even that support base is crumbling. The party which has ruled supreme in white politics for decades, and still holds 121 of the 166 elected seats, is being squeezed from left and right. There is a mood of uncertainty in the country. White politics are more unpredictable than at any time since the Nationalists shocked everyone by ousting Jan Smuts' United Party government in 1948.

Last week in parliament Botha signalled that his party's main platform in the election would be 'law and order' and opposition to foreign interference, as in American sanctions. In the absence of any compelling reason why anyone should vote for the Nationalists, they are providing a list of bogeymen to vote against. It includes such strange bedfellows as the African National Congress, the United States Congress and the Soviet Union.

IN ADOPTING these issues, Botha is attempting to address the threat from the far right wing by outflanking the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) and the Conservative Party (CP), thus emulating John Vorster's success in smashing the far right in the 1977 general election. In that year whites were called on to cast their votes against 'interfering foreigners' such as Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale and Andrew Young, and they responded in droves, giving the National Party its largest-ever landslide.

Botha is unlikely to repeat this feat because during his nine-year tenure as leader of the party, a dramatic change has taken place. The National Party is no longer the political wing of


TODAY I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE U.S.S.R!!!
THE USSR IS TO BE FOUND RIGHT HERE ON THE GLOBE.
SLAP!
SMASH!!
YOU KNOW, I ALWAYS GET UPSET WHEN I TALK ABOUT THE USSR...
©CHRISTIAN
TINKLE! TINKLE!

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Afrikanerdom — it is just another political party. When the Conservative Party broke from the NP in 1982 nearly every Afrikaner cultural organisation from the Broederbond to the Voortrekkers (an ideological version of the Boy Scouts) was split down the middle. These organisations were the cement which had held the party together.

In the last election in 1981 the HNP took 14 per cent of the vote, though because of the winner-take-all system failed to win any seats. Since then 17 members of parliament have split from the NP to join the CP and in by-elections the far right-wing parties have won seats from the Nationalists. Swings of more than 30 per cent away from the government have been recorded in the remote rural areas of the Transvaal and in some bluecollar constituencies.

Anyone who doubts that most of these people have left the ruling party forever need only spend some time travelling in the rural areas of the Transvaal. P.W. Botha is probably the most hated individual north of Nylstroom — the stream north of Pretoria that the Boers once mistook for the source of the Nile. This antipathy is only partly due to the few changes to socio-economic apartheid introduced during the Botha 'reform' era.

The farmers of the Northern Transvaal dislike Botha, a Cape Nat who has spent little time maintaining contact with the grassroots of the party. And, difficult as this might be for people overseas to believe, there is a widespread belief among right-wing whites that Botha has been too soft on the rebellion in the ghettoes. An indication of CP sentiment is the fact that their candidates include Hendrik van Den Bergh, the former head of the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) who built Vorster's brutal security empire, and General 'Rooi Rus' Swanepoel, the interrogator of the Rivonia trialists dubbed the 'Beast of Soweto' for the harsh methods he used to put down the Soweto uprising of 1976.

Probably the most important factor which will motivate whites to vote against the National Party is the fact that the standard of living of nearly all South Africans has deteriorated since 1980. In the last election in 1981 the party shed votes to the left and right because the economy was in a recession and inflation stood at 16 per cent. Six years later — with the effects of sanctions yet to be felt — the economy is in a much worse state, and inflation — which already stands at 20 per cent — is about to lift off.

UNDER BOTHA the National Party has increasingly become a party of big business, hosting high-profile summits with the capitalists and mine bosses who were once vilified in the Nationalist press as 'Hoggenheimers'. In the process the party has alienated the remnants of the white working class, the small farmers and the lower to middle-level civil servants — all those, estimated to be about a third of the Afrikaners, who failed to benefit economically from the first 30 years of National Party rule.

Now, for the first time since the depression years of the 1930s, white unemployment has become a serious problem. In central Johannesburg white labourers dig ditches for £6 a day, a few feet away from black workers doing exactly the same work. Operation Hunger — a charity organisation which once exclusively sought to counter starvation and malnutrition in the black areas — has had an increasing number of requests for assistance from whites.

The right-wing dissidence is by and large restricted to the Transvaal and parts of the Orange Free State. It is expected that the right-wing parties have a ceiling at this stage of about 40 of the 166 seats, but their extraordinary failure to reach an election pact and form a united front against the government means they could win less than 10.

This is unlikely to distract Botha from what he sees as the main purpose of the election — attempting to rout the right. But his endeavours to win back the most right-wing Afrikaners are now creating a haemorrhaging of support from the 'reformist' or 'verligte' wing of the party. The defections of Wynand Malan, an advocate of talks with the ANC; of the ambassador to Britain, Dennis Worrall and of academics at the intellectual headquarters of Afrikanerdom, Stellenbosch University, has caught the party — which had been preparing for battle on its right flank — by surprise.

People such as Worrall and Malan are hardly left-wing. The Kwanatal Indaba which they support comes nowhere close to providing a solution to conflict in the country. It was effectively a multiracial negotiating forum between Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha movement and English-speaking whites in Natal, and was not acceptable to any of the chief protagonists — the ANC, the trade unions, the United Democratic Front, AZAPO, or even the National Party government.

> ***Now Botha, nearing the end of a 50-year long political career, is turning back to his own people for affirmation — only to find that even that support base is crumbling. The party which has ruled supreme in white politics for decades is being squeezed from left and right***

But their disaffection intensifies the crisis and increases the chances of the parties to the left of the National Party, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and the almost moribund New Republic Party (NRP). They have formed an election pact which could increase their combined total from 31 to more than 40. If the right-wing parties do well, then the combined total to the left and right of the National Party would edge closer to the magic figure of 84 required to prevent an overall Nationalist majority in parliament.

A situation where a defection of 10 MPs in an already splintering party could put the government into a minority would be very different from the current omnipotent position of the National Party. This would then give rise to new possibilities: coalitions to the left or to the right of the National Party, or even an outright military coup to supplant the shaky facade of civilian rule.

Of course, the white electorate could yet allow themselves to be stampeded back into the laager and return the National Party with a bigger than ever majority — that is part of the unpredictability of the election. The press clamps have prevented any fair coverage of the ANC and the Nationalists are using selective quotes to vilify the organisation and discredit those favouring negotiations with it. In addition, the government has control over radio and television and the Afrikaans press, a media monopoly which it has used in past elections to good effect.

But even if the white masses stand by Botha, the election has already precipitated a crumbling of support from within the party establishment — a sign that the crisis in the country has caught up with white politics. And the significance of a potential governing alliance of whites to the left of the National Party with a policy of negotiating with black leaders on a more open-ended basis should not be underplayed. It could shorten by a few years what looks increasingly like an inevitable bloodbath. Nor is it irrelevant that a potential government of the far right could make that bloodbath a whole lot messier. □

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Schicki-Micki & Kir Royal

Shades of the UK: West Germany has become 'over-parliamentary', writes* CHRISTOPHER HARVIE. *So where can the grassroots disaffections go next?

Tübingen

FOR A FEW WEEKS before Christmas, German TV ran a serial called *Kir Royal* about a gossip columnist in Munich. It plainly took its cue from LWT's *Lytton's Diary* - transmitted earlier in the year on the same channel - but as if rewritten by John Cleese and Paul Foot. Surrealistic and biting, its left-wing authors Franz-Xaver Kroetz and Dieter Hildebrandt set their trendy butterfly 'Baby' Schimmerlos against the intrigues of Munich's super-rich and the omnipresent - and unmistakable - figure of a Minister-President, escorted everywhere by his toadies.

Kir Royal surfaced in the election campaign, but not quite in the way one would have imagined. The general secretary of the Christian Democrats, the lizard-like Heiner Geissler, delivered an attack on the left wing of the Social Democrats and the Greens as 'the *Kir Royal* society', and the Greens in particular as a 'Schicki-Micki' party, fashionable and irresponsible. By a clever inversion, the left was identified with the very society it set out to criticise.

This was not perhaps surprising, given the torpid nature of the midwinter campaign, which ended on 25 January. Expectations of a depoliticised electorate 'retreating into private life' were partly fulfilled, but this hit the right rather than the left. The most significant shift was the failure of the CDU/CSU (for all its neo-conservative platform activity) to mobilise its traditional support, and the — partial — expansion of the Liberal FDP and the Greens into the vacuum. Fractious farmers proved more significant than the towns (for the last time?) in a contest which seemed more than anything to confirm the circumspect conservative solidity of the country. The CDU dropped to a record low of 44 per cent but the coalition still collected over 53 per cent of the vote.

The fact that the voters got *Kir Royal* wrong is linked with the other major aspect of the election: the fissile nature of the left and its failure to make much progress. The SPD vote sank by 1.3 points to 37 per cent and although the Greens saw their vote go up by half again this still took them only to 8.2 per cent.

Hostilities within the SPD broke out almost as soon as the polls closed. The defeated candidate, Johannes Rau, renounced any intention of following Willy Brandt as party chairman when the latter retires in 1988, and the leader of the left, Oskar Lafontaine, threw his hat into the ring. The left line, awakening a lot of response in the local branches, was that Rau's failure to contemplate a coalition with the Greens, or fight them on their own, cogently-argued grounds, pushed him into the position of campaigning — on personality rather than on policy — for an impossible absolute majority.

The left is in a strong position, given the present weakness of the SPD's old right, heavily implicated in the *Neue Heimat* scandal, the Hamburg electoral disaster and the collapse of Rau's 'non-political' campaign. But this confidence, and the self-assurance and skill of Oskar Lafontaine, mask fearsome problems in the SPD's relation to social change in Germany.

Some of these are comparable with the situation of the Labour Party. The SPD remains strong, and in fact increased its vote, in such old heavy industrial areas as Rau's North-Rhine Westphalia and Lafontaine's Saarland. In new industrial areas, and above all in the service centres growing up around regional capitals like Frankfurt or Stuttgart, it is extremely weak. With the exception of one seat in Mannheim, the SPD now returns not a single directly-elected MP from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria.

In both states the votes for the Greens are particularly high. Admittedly they poll best in the university towns — 18.4 per cent in Freiburg, 15.1 per cent in Tübingen, 14.9 per cent in Heidelberg — where they act as the political edge of the 'respectable poor': the eternal students and all those who manage to extract enough from part-time university, hospital and bookshop jobs to keep them in a part-share in a flat and a Deux-Chevaux. But they are also beginning to make progress in the anonymous concrete suburbs and on the land, among farmers worried by pollution and their neglect by metropolitan politicians.

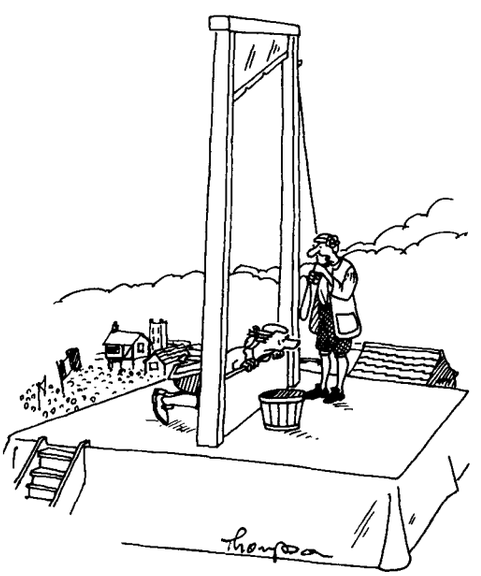
Greens here to stay

The personal clashes which marked the first descent of the Greens on Bonn gave rise to hopes in the SPD that their stay would be brief. This has not been the case: not only have they pushed up their Bonn representation but they now return about 8 per cent of MPs in seven out of the eleven Lands (Lafontaine's Saarland being a notable exception).

They have also evolved a competent and articulate leadership group. Otto Schily, the leading Bonn 'realist', managed more than anyone else to put the wind up the coalition over the Flick bribery affair, while Joschka Fischer became an effective environment minister in Hesse's Red-Green coalition. The longer the Greens are around, the less chance there is of pulling them or their voters back into the SPD fold.

While the Greens remain, the SPD, unlike the 'middle-class' parties, is faced with a fight on two fronts. The result of this could be a perilous zero-sum game: any advance in one direction will be matched by a withdrawal of support at the other end. In a country where region, education, age and religion count far more than class, calculating exactly how this would work is complex.

The result of a 1986 survey by the CDU's Adenauer Institute was to show that the SPD would make gains from the Greens among the 'young, well-educated officials and technologist' categories and (roughly to the same degree) among the 'Apo-Opas', the veterans of 1960s radicalism,



"Mind yer fingers!"

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Germany's George Webers. It could not, however, have much chance of expanding its working class vote by proceeding along these lines.

Indeed in a society where the manufacturing sector remains strong, and trade union membership, despite unemployment, is actually increasing, any shift of the SPD in a Green direction could alienate part of an important and influential sector of traditional SPD support.

Take an example: Green social philosophers have called in question the whole issue of job creation, pointing as an alternative a low-energy-consuming co-operative, part-time-working, job-sharing society with shared parenting and continuous access to education. This sort of initiative has won the praise of intelligent CDU figures like Kurt Biedenkopf: the Greens have been 'asking the right questions'.

But the issue 'do something about unemployment' remains the biggest demand from the voters, four times greater than concern about the environment. The SPD right believes that the best course is to follow Helmut Kohl with 'Steady as she goes, Germany' and wait until his lightweight regime runs itself on the rocks.

THERE REMAINS, however, one potentially disruptive problem. The accession of the Greens to the parliamentary system has made West Germany stable, but it has also produced this meaningless election campaign. Politics, as Robert Leicht wrote in *Die Zeit*, has become over-parliamentary, even among the Greens. The reason is simple: the funds available to parties which break through the 5 per cent barrier.

But the result is that the democratic *basis* — the local parties, the citizens' initiatives, the voluntary groups — are unwontedly weak. Young voters seem, according to polls, more radical than their elders, but also (particularly after Chernobyl and Sandoz) more browned-off with politics in general. The Greens are already regarded as 'old hat' in an ageing society; the Young Socialists are extinct over large areas of the country; only the right-wing Junge Union, worryingly nationalist in some of its policies, seems to be making headway.

The collapse of the Red-Green coalition in Hesse has brought these tendencies to a premature crisis. The anti-nuclear line of the Greens was in fact shared by the Hesse SPD and in principle by the DGB (the German TUC), but the huge numbers employed in the Land in ALKEM, NUKEM and other atom-related plants were vulnerable to propaganda from the Bonn environment ministry, headed by Walter Walmann, the CDU's leading politician in Hesse. The attempt of Ulrich Steger, the SPD economics minister, to sanction limited nuclear fuel production provoked the Greens into withdrawal, the resignation of Holger Borner, the Land premier, and the calling of new elections for 5 April.

At a conference on 14 February the left-wing South Hesse SPD restated its anti-nuclear policy, but backed Borner's successor, Hans Krollmann. A renewal of the Red-Green coalition is thus feasible after 5 April and, with the consequences of Chernobyl chillingly obvious in the milk produced by cattle fed on last summer's silage, and worsening unemployment figures, the SPD is better placed than might at first appear. 'The tensions', *Die Zeit* wrote early in January, 'only come after the vote.' How right it was. □

Christopher Harvie is professor of politics at Tübingen university.

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

The Prime Minister's chemistry test

Peter Hennessy

ONE IMPORTANT and traditional British activity has been privatised during the Thatcher years and nobody has noticed mainly because its flotation has not involved ministers, Parliament, the Stock Exchange, television advertising or razzmatazz of any kind. And this traditional activity — far older than any state airline, public utility or telephone system — is the Royal Commission.

> ***'Mrs Thatcher relies strongly on instinct and first impression. She prefers doers to handwringers. Those whose style she likes 'can speak truth unto power and do'***

Mrs Thatcher has not created any since 1979 though two standing ones are still in existence — the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. In the absence of new ones, other bodies have moved in — the Anglican Church established a surrogate Royal Commission on urban deprivation whose report, *Faith in the City*[1], so offended some ministers. Last month the Royal Institute of Public Administration became a surrogate parent when it produced *Top Jobs in Whitehall*[2], a highly polished and judicious examination of appointments and promotions in the senior Civil Service undertaken by a committee of the great and the good chaired by Professor David Williams, President of Wolfson College, Cambridge.

There has been a high turnover of senior civil servants since Mrs Thatcher entered No. 10 as the big post-war intake reached retirement age. Forty-three permanent secretaries and 138 deputy secretaries (the top two ranks, in appointments to which the Prime Minister has a direct say) departed between 1979 and 1985, which is virtually a complete turnover as the current strength of these grades is 38 permanent secretaries and 134 deputy secretaries (some of the appointments were lateral transfers rather than promotions). There was clearly scope for patronage and for application of the 'one of us' test on the grand scale. Has Mrs Thatcher politicised the career Civil Service at the top? The Williams committee clears her of the charge. What the RIPA inquiry did detect, however, was an unprecedented level of personal interest in top appointments from the incumbent in No. 10:

> To some extent the appointment process has become more personalised in the sense that the top level 'catching the eye' of the Prime Minister (in a favourable or unfavourable manner) may now be more important than in the past. Evidence to our group suggests that personal contacts and impressions play a role in promotion decisions. Downing Street communicates more opinions about the performance of civil servants, even down to quite junior levels, based on impressions made at meetings with the Prime Minister.

Mrs Thatcher relies strongly on instinct and first impression. She prefers doers to handwringers. Those whose style she likes *can* speak truth unto power and do. Like all Prime Ministers she has her favourites among the senior Civil Service. It is very largely a matter of personal chemistry not personal politics. In personnel and personal matters as well as policy, she is a conviction politician. And the people who draw up the shortlists, Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary, and five fellow permanent secretaries on the Senior Appointments Selection Committee, have a sense of which officials have passed the chemistry test at meetings and briefings in No. 10 and which have not.

THIS CREATES another related problem which is significant and insidious if you believe that a permanent, tenured career Civil Service has a cardinal public service to perform in telling ministers what they really think and in serving up analysis and advice free of political varnish. There is plenty of evidence — anecdotal admittedly — to back up the testimony of Lord Bancroft, Head of the Home Civil Service, when he said last year in an interview for Brook Productions' Channel 4 Television series, *All the Prime Minister's Men*, that:

> The dangers are of the younger people seeing that advice which ministers want to hear falls with a joyous note on their ears, and advice which they need to hear falls on their ears with a rather dismal note, will tend to make officials trim, make their advice what ministers want to hear, rather than what they need to hear.

Whitehall discounts the politicisation of appointments claims. The RIPA's analysis reflects that opinion. But the trimming of advice is recognised as a problem. It's one which creates the impression of politicisation not least in the minds of opposition politicians who, in a matter of months, just might be ministers. If there is a change of administration, the permanent government will go on red alert: if just one Thatcher appointee at permanent secretary level is symbolically purged the alarm bells will ring from one end of Whitehall to the other and the relatively reassuring picture painted in *Top Jobs in Whitehall* will crumble like the portrait of Dorian Gray. □

1. *Faith in the City*, Church House Publishing, £8.50.
2. *Top Jobs in Whitehall*, RIPA, 3 Birdcage Walk, London SW1, £4.50.

Peter Hennessy is a Visiting Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute

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Now Rupert has bought Australia as well

Adrian Pobjoy

Melbourne

RUPERT MURDOCH has successfully bid about $A2.2 billion to buy Australia's biggest media company, the *Herald and Weekly Times* (HWT). In doing so he has achieved the heaviest concentration of newspaper ownership in the western world outside Ireland.

In Australia's biggest takeover, the mammoth and financially faltering company that Murdoch's father Sir Keith shaped and largely built has given Murdoch 59 per cent of Australian newspaper circulation. The battle for the empire of newspapers, television and radio began on 3 December and lasted 65 days. It was a messy one, with court battles between rival multi-millionaires, the Australian Journalists Association and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal — who objected to the sale because Murdoch is an American citizen.

By 11 February no major Australian media group had not been bought, sold or changed by what became known as the 'media garage sale'. Everyone had been expecting some kind of reshuffle because of plans by Robert Hawke's Labor administration to prevent any interest controlling too much radio, newspaper and TV space in any one Australian city or area.

Australia will never be the same.

● The man who gave sportslovers the World Series Cricket, Kerry Packer, sold his Channel Nine television network to self-made former Englishman, Alan Bond, for $A1 billion.

● Australia's richest man, Robert Holmes à Court, tried to wrest HWT from Murdoch by forcing up the share price from $12 to Murdoch's final offer of $15. Holmes à Court finished by getting the HWT newspapers in his home city of Perth.

● Murdoch sold the HWT television station Channel Seven, Melbourne, to Australia's next biggest newspaper publisher, Fairfax, for $320 million in order to comply with the new ownership rules.

> ***Some say Murdoch made the decision to buy because of his mother. She wanted her son to walk back into the office her husband had chaired when it was one of the healthiest and most vital news empires in the world***

● Fairfax put in a $15 bid for HWT when the takeover was all over bar the shouting. The *Herald* board would not accept the bid under the conditions demanded. Now it seems Fairfax will have to sell Channel Seven or its newspaper, the *Melbourne Age*, to comply with the new laws. The *Age* is Australia's best quality newspaper and makes money — on a Saturday it has something like 128 broadsheet pages, most of them classified.

● Murdoch has sold his Channel 10 television network for $842 million to Westfield Holdings, more known for its interests in building and operating supermarkets.

● Kerry Stokes, a relative unknown, has bought the radio stations which were part of HWT.

Not many countries have a *Herald and Weekly Times*-type presence. Before the carve-up, it consisted of eight daily newspapers for the cities, four Sunday newspapers, two television stations, seven radio stations, 69 suburban newspapers, 10 regional newspapers (most of them dailies), eight magazines, and newspapers in Fiji and New Guinea, plus a major interest in the Australian equivalent of the Press Association, Australian Associated Press.

Some say Murdoch made that decision to buy on Thanksgiving Day while skiing in Aspen, Colorado, because of his mother, Dame Elizabeth. She wanted her son to walk back into the office her husband, Sir Keith, had chaired when it was one of the healthiest and most vital news empires in the world. In its heyday in the 1950s, the group flagship, the *Melbourne Herald*, was selling 500,000 copies a day in a state with a population of about 2½ million and was rated one of the best evening papers in the world. A commentator in Murdoch's *Weekend Australian* said last week the *Herald* made the London evening papers look like provincial sheets. The *Melbourne Sun News-Pictorial* was selling close to 600,000 copies. Everywhere there was health.

MURDOCH has bought an ailing giant. The *Herald* sells 234,000 copies a day and loses $15 million a year. The *Sun* sells 566,000 and is one of the few bright spots. The chief radio station, 3DB, is so shaky that the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal has doubts about renewing its licence, and Channel Seven Melbourne made something like only $2 million last year.

The HWT was the only national media group with interests in all Australian states to have an open share register. On 3 December when Murdoch unexpectedly walked into the boardroom, shares were selling at $A6.50. Murdoch bid $12 cash. The board put in their decision late that afternoon, that in the absence of a higher offer, it would accept the bid. The story was different in 1979 when Murdoch bid $123 million for half the company's shares. An aghast management led by the now widely held to be incompetent and staid Sir Keith Macpherson hastily erected a complicated cross-ownership of shares. Macpherson declared the *Herald* 'not for sale at any price'.

This time Murdoch simply blasted away the opposition and distaste with cash. South African born lawyer Robert Holmes à Court bid $13 a share after much public speculation. Murdoch matched it and then bid $15. Holmes à Court launched a court action against his rival on the grounds of his being a US citizen these days. This was matched with enquiries and action by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and the Australian Journalists Association. The enigmatic art lover and racehorse owner let go of Murdoch when he got control of HWT newspapers in Perth — and yet another big profit.

The average laid-back and relatively apolitical Australian probably does not like what has happened, but is pretty sick of the way the story of the year has been page one and item one for so long. One cartoon in the *Herald* had a newsreader saying 'in a shock move, no media selloffs or takeovers were announced today.'

A group called Free the Media has had little success even getting its message into newspapers. Its figurehead is Sir John Norris QC. He conducted an enquiry into the concentration and ownership of the press in 1980-81 and remembers Murdoch saying then that he did not think any more concentration would be a good thing for Australia. The journalist who has spoken out most passionately against the takeover is Paul Chadwick, an investigative reporter for the *Sun News-Pictorial*.

At a meeting convened by their union, Chadwick told journalists at least to devote the same amount of investigation to the takeover that they would to similar stories. He wondered why no HWT editor or manager had asked him to write something about the issue, even though he had been a regular commentator on radio and television and knew a lot about media concentration.

> ***At a meeting convened by the union, Chadwick told journalists at least to devote the same amount of investigation to the takeover that they would to similar stories***

The government of Robert Hawke largely believes Murdoch's newspaper, the *Australian*, was heavily biased against Labor after the Whitlam government was sacked in 1975 by the Governor-general. Hawke's foreign minister, Bill Hayden, has tried to speak out, but was slapped down. The Opposition Liberal Party has toed the free market line except for one member — and he was slapped down too. The Liberal Prime Minister who replaced Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, wrote an article in the *Melbourne Age* entitled 'Why The Murdoch Move Is Dangerous'.

Hawke had dinner with Murdoch two weeks ago. Last week Chadwick quit the *Sun*. Murdoch had all the HWT editors to a weekend conference last weekend. Rumours have started among journalists, but Murdoch says no one will be sacked — if they are good. □

Adrian Pobjoy is a reporter with the Melbourne Sun-News Pictorial.

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Censorship and *Perdition*: a reply to Victoria Radin

NS theatre critic Victoria Radin used her column (NS 6 February) to review, for the first time, the script of the controversial play* Perdition *by Jim Allen — banned from performance at London's Royal Court. Radin found the play 'nasty' and charged it with using 'the venerable psychological mechanism by which the victim stands accused'. Here, the play's director* KEN LOACH *— with journalist* ANDREW HORNUNG *— responds

> The vilification . . . has been raucously loud. The clear message is that free enquiry should not be tolerated.

SO PROCLAIMS the leading article (on the spy satellite issue) in the *New Statesman* (6 February). Turn to page 25 of the same issue for some real vilification.

Victoria Radin's 'review' of Jim Allen's banned play *Perdition* is an extraordinary mixture of distortion and misrepresentation. 'The script constantly nudges one to see resemblances between the Jews and the Nazis', writes Ms Radin. The script does no such thing. It does point out that some German Zionists sought a special relationship with Nazis. The Zionists were 'utilising a threat which to them signalled the bankruptcy of assimilation, and paved the way for the creation of the Jewish state'. Joachim Prinz, a Rabbi from Berlin, wrote:

> A state which is constructed on the principle of purity of nation and race can only have respect for those Jews who see themselves in the same way.

Such nice distinctions between anti-Zionist and anti-semitic are of little interest to Ms Radin. Her article is but one of a series of virulent attacks on a play by the most important socialist playwright of his generation.

Jim Allen's work, from *Days of Hope* to *Spongers*, has given a voice to the oppressed and to those who fight injustice. So why did the Royal Court, 'the Playwright's Theatre', withdraw *Perdition* the day before it was due to open?

The context of the play has become familiar, although presented through the distorting lens of a hostile press. Briefly, the narrative shows an Israeli journalist accusing Dr Yaron, a Hungarian survivor from the Holocaust now living in London, of collaboration. Yaron sues for libel. The play's characters are fictitious, but the evidence brought is factual.

The question is asked: how did the Nazis manage to round up and deport half-a-million Jews in Hungary within two months, when Germany was all but defeated? Answer: with the active co-operation of the Jewish leadership in Budapest, in particular a Zionist group led by a man called Rudolf Kastner.

Was this co-operation simply the responsibility of weak or wicked individuals? No; it had its roots in the ideology of Zionism, the movement to create a separate homeland for the Jews. During the Third Reich, Jewish emigration to Palestine became the priority, with rescue to other countries a secondary consideration.

This analysis is supported in the play by reference to events, speeches, documents, and first-hand accounts of what happened. It has widespread support among published historians, and British and Israeli Jews. If you can read it in books, why can you not see it on stage?

Lobby for silence

Of all theatres, the Royal Court is the last one you would expect to apply censorship. It made its reputation as the defender of new writing. And *Perdition* was first bought by the theatre over 18 months ago, a long time in which to assess its worth and likely effect.

It was cut and edited by Jim Allen and myself with the help and advice of Michael Hastings, the literary manager. Yet there was no question of its being withdrawn until 36 hours before its first night. It is simply not credible that the theatre management changed its mind on the script at such a late date without overwhelming and undeclared pressure from the censorship lobby.

So how did political censorship come to the Royal Court?

The first shot was fired by an article in the *Guardian* on 14 January. Full of lines that did not appear in the final text, it quoted abuse from leading Zionists without declaring their political hostility; it raised the spectre of anti-semitism by the old trick of confusing that with anti-Zionism, and it grossly misinterpreted the play.

To take one example, it is claimed that the play's central message is that 'Zionists positively desired the slaughter of the Jews'. Compare that to this quotation from the play:

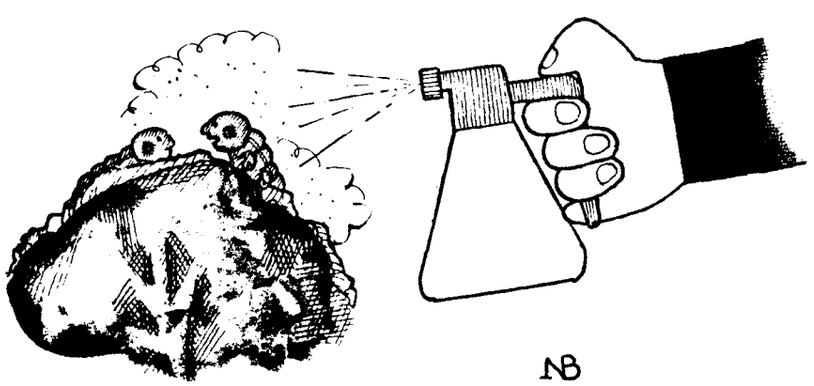
> Are you suggesting that the Zionist leaders actually welcomed the Holocaust?
>
> No, I'm not saying that. It would be monstrous to even think that.

In the wake of this inflammatory writing, the letters column was flooded with abusive letters. Then a whole series of articles by Zionists or their apologists appeared in one paper after another: Martin Gilbert in the *Telegraph*, Stephen Games in the *Independent*, Lord Goodman in the *Standard*, and Bernard Levin in *The Times*.

It is worth remembering at this stage that no one outside the immediate circle of the production had seen the the script that was to be presented. We can only assume that Zionist organisations, possibly the Institute for Jewish Affairs, were circulating an early draft of the script, with copies of hostile reviews from historians sympathetic to their cause. Certainly the Institute itself presented its own anonymous report attacking the play.

The method of these articles can be illustrated by Goodman's piece in the *Standard*. He writes that 'the play is a total distortion of the truth and a brutal insult to the Jewish community the world over'. His evidence? None. Not a quotation from the play, not an inaccurate fact exposed, not an argument delineated or discounted, not a document challenged. Instead, this eminent lawyer smears the play by association. He discusses the 'literature of classic anti-semitism' that has 'permitted credulity to feed and foster hatred through the centuries'.

Levin litters his writing with such phrases as 'peculiar vileness', 'physical stink', 'ignorant,



'Of course, morally *he hasn't a leg to stand on.'*

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uneducated and brutish, 'horrible lies'. Like Goodman, Levin sees no need to trouble his reader with any facts to support his tirade. In the long article, there is not one quotation or incident recounted from the play. Levin has a particular hypocrisy: he claims to oppose censorship, while, through his venom, encouraging the play's continuing suppression.

One function of these attacks was to indicate that this historical episode was not available for discussion by non-Zionists. In the words of the *New Statesman* (on the spy satellites), 'the message is that free enquiry should not be tolerated'. Another purpose was to create a sense of public anger before the play opened.

At the same time, the play's opponents used their influence to lobby and manipulate behind the scenes. We know, for example, that there was a meeting between some members of the Royal Court Council and Lord Weidenfeld and Martin Gilbert four days before the play was due to open. Its purpose could only be to bring pressure to bear on the Court.

Who organised that meeting? Why was not Jim Allen or any representative from the production given a similar opportunity to defend the play? The tactic seems to have been for the play's opponents to claim that its production would cause outrage, and, as proof, point to the outrage that they themselves had caused.

Zionism and Jews

And so the play was banned, apparently on the sole authority of Max Stafford-Clark, the artistic director, just as we were preparing for our dress rehearsal. Did he fall, or was he pushed?

There have been rumours of threats of withdrawal of funds, which Stafford-Clark has refuted. Certainly the Court is financially vulnerable. It has been suggested that a valuable co-production arrangement with Joe Papp in New York might have been jeopardised. I do not claim to be in a position to evaluate these stories. What is certain is that the stated reason for the ban is quite inadequate: 'going ahead would cause great distress to sections of the community'. Plays about fascism have caused distress in Germany, but does that mean they should be censored?

Stafford-Clark himself staged a play about the Falklands war in Plymouth, despite local objections about 'distress'. Of course, he was not fighting such powerful opposition there. The ultimate 'distress' is that of the Jews who were transported to their deaths from Budapest, while their own leaders, who knew what was happening, failed to warn them. Their voices were suppressed then, and they are suppressed now.

The efforts of the Zionist campaign did not end with the ban at the Royal Court. The lobby has tried to ensure that no theatre will stage the play in London or elsewhere. A number of managements have read the script and been interested in staging it. One producer was told that the theatre he wanted would become unavailable for this play. Not only that, he would not be allowed to rent any theatres belonging to that particular proprietor in the future. Another was telephoned from New York and told if he produced the play, his future career on Broadway would be in jeopardy.

Legal action has been threatened. We have been advised that it would have little chance of success, but the possibility of legal costs is a severe deterrent to even a sympathetic management.

Gerry Sinott of the Olympia Theatre in Dublin was very enthusiastic, and plans were made to open there almost immediately. Then the propaganda machine went into action. A Labour politician was quoted as saying 'Dublin is not a dustbin place for staging the plays which have been thrown out of every country' (a transparently ludicrous remark) and objecting to 'racialist overtones', which do not exist, in a play he had not read. The Olympia could not stand the pressure.

We have to remind ourselves that we are talking here about censorship, where a political group has used every device to prevent discussion of its own political past. In fact, these people encourage the very anti-semitism they seek to prevent, because it appears that a powerful clique has, through its influence in the press and elsewhere, stopped the play from being performed. But the Zionists do not speak for the Jewish people. They are only a political tendency. Just as the history of communism does not belong to the Stalinists, so Jewish history does not belong to the Zionists, and the history of that terrible War belongs to us all.

Of course, it is not a matter for dispute that historical evidence, if quoted, should be accurate. The charge that *Perdition* is inaccurate has been made principally by Martin Gilbert. Sundry hacks have simply deferred to his authority and then gone on to attack the play.

In Gilbert's article in the *Telegraph*, 22 January, his prime example of 'inaccuracy' is the play's claim that for six weeks after the deportation began the entire Zionist leadership 'did not publish or even utter one single word of protest'. Gilbert responds by referring to several cables sent to Allied governments before the deportations, warning of the impending developments and urging 'all action'. But the play speaks not of private cables, but of *publishing* — that is, broadcasting to masses in print or on the air — and *protesting* to arouse world opinion and action.

If the play is wrong about these forms of action, let Gilbert provide the evidence. In fact, these leaders simply repeated their routine and bourgeois approach: they kept whispering in the ears of the powerful even when they had proved in the past to be deaf. Of course, compared with the World Jewish Congress's suppression of the emerging facts of the Holocaust — something amply documented in histories sympathetic to Zionism — the sending of these cables must indeed seem like a sudden tornado of activity.

The authentic Zionist response was shown by Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of the American Jewish Congress, who, earlier in the War, when reports of the systematic killing of Jews began to reach him, was able to write to Roosevelt: 'I succeeded, together with the leaders of other Jewish organisations, in keeping them out of the press'.

The charge of racism against the writer, who was a founder of the Anti-fascist Committee in Manchester, is so gross as barely to warrant an answer. Max Stafford-Clark, to his credit, dismissed such allegations as 'vile distortion'.

Fear of fascism

Far from the play attacking Jews, its central idea is precisely the opposite: that Jews under attack were betrayed by Zionist and pro-Zionist leaders. If the play were to attack Jewry as such, it would lose all meaning. It is not Jim Allen who conflates Jews with Zionists. That conflation is a fundamental plank of Zionist disinformation today.

Jim Allen not only exposes, again, the betrayal of Hungarian Jewry by its leaders, but also suggests that Zionism provided the ideological rationale that guided this and other instances of betrayal. It is this political attack on Zionism that outrages the play's opponents. The absurdity is, of course, that this discussion takes place without any public presentation of the play that started it all.

Part of the script deals with the rescue trains that took 1,600 Jews to safety from Budapest in 1944. The Zionist leaders prepared the list of who would be saved — the 'rich', the 'prominents', the 'Functionaries'. Is it not fair to say that those who have campaigned against the presentation of *Perdition* are the contemporary equivalent of those who boarded the rescue trains and got out?

This play that has been so vilified contains a thread that has run through much of the work that I have been privileged to do with Jim Allen: that we should learn from the past so that we can counter the rise of fascism in the years ahead:

> If another major economic crisis occurs at some time in the future, can we with confidence assert that fascism will not arise again like a broken sewerage pipe, disgorging its filth and corruption in society? Have we been given not a victory over fascism, but a reprieve, a warning, a breathing space?

That is the play that has been banned. □

Victoria Radin will reply next week.

AGENDA

THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM

6 March

The *New Statesman* devotes a whole issue to 'The Future of Socialism' setting the agenda and opening up the debate on the most urgent issues of the day:

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ESSAY

Hawke and the culture vultures

Here, we wonder where it's all leading: TV soaps and designer socialism; postmodernity and simulation; Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock. In Australia, the whole caboodle has come together in the Labor government. **MEAGHAN MORRIS** ***has seen the future — and it won't work***

DURING SUMMER in Australia, postmodernity collapses. The talk shows shut down, polls and ratings stop, TV soaps suspend their subversive activities, arts critics disappear and, as heat and humidity dissolve all style, public interest reverts to traditional modern forms — grand sports narratives, business takeover plots, and realist weather reports.

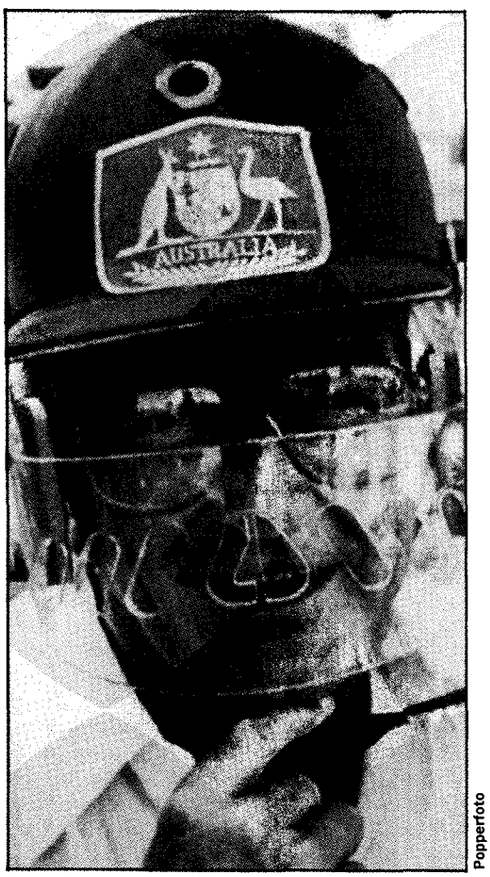
Early in February, after two torpid months of yachting and cricket humiliations and a revolution in media ownership, the style wars of politics proper resumed for 1987 with the Leaked Buzzword incident.

Smartly pre-empting an Opposition press conference, the Labor government revealed that the Liberal election buzzword was to be *incentivation*. Asked by chortling pundits what this neologism might mean, Liberal leader John Howard tried to meet their scepticism with a romantic faith in the semantics of empathy. Middle Australia, he explained, would know instinctively that what it meant was what they wanted — incentive and motivation (i.e., 'flatter' taxes). Bob Hawke said incentivation was like something you'd do to cats.

It was a good start to hostilities for Labor. In postmodern politics, the point is not what a slogan says but who says it first, and how. Beginning election battle with a leaked and belittled buzzword is not, even for romantics, stylistically incentivating.

However it wasn't just the leak that let us know the year had begun in earnest. Even in summer in Australia, all serious events now happen in advance of themselves in that pre-empting of reality called by theorists of postmodernism 'simulation'. This summer, for example, businessmen like Rupert Murdoch and Alan Bond claimed chunks of Australian media before the legislation to allow them to do so was even 'really' in place.

No, the sign that summer was over was a critique of the Buzzword on the first edition of ABC-TV's prestigious commentary show *The Carleton-Walsh Report*. Richard Carleton brushed aside the matter of its meaning and went straight to the issue of substance — that is, style. Wasn't 'incentivation', he asked Howard, exactly the sort of staid idea you'd expect from some plodding old ad agency? It wasn't, well, *ketchy*. Howard shivered, and the autumn began.



Popperfoto

Bob Hawke: the unassailable face of designer post-socialism?

AS AN OUTSIDER reading some recent British debates about the politics of style, I've been surprised at how often all sides eventually assume a separation of worlds between fashion, popular culture and consumer aesthetics on the one hand, and the conduct of national politics on the other. For some writers, the left should learn from the former to dress for success in the latter. For others, fashion remains separate — a complex and powerful force, perhaps, but still a leisure supplement to political 'work'. I must admit that when I first read a Robert Elms tirade about 'drabbies', I enjoyed its expression of every prejudice I'd harboured about the style of the British left. I thought of the suet prose in theory journals, essentialism/idealism/biologism congealed on every page. I thought of lectures from visiting Britons and a rhetoric of class struggle that seemed to belong (unlike class) to another century. I thought of a nightmare moment in the London tube when, dreaming miserably of sun and surf and seafood, I looked up at a mass of shapeless bodies shuffling down in a blur of brown and grey.

This memory of horror, however, immediately prompted a question. Why should an associate editor of *The Face* writing about British left culture sound like a homesick Australian tourist? At first, I thought it was just the self-serving hostility to difference that many people experience at times, but that we are rarely asked to celebrate in the name of socialist renewal. Then, another reason for my brief affinity with Elms emerged. It was a homely familiarity in his thinking. 'Political survival depends on adapting to the times — that is what style is' . . . Robert Elms sounds just like Bob Hawke.

One of the reasons why a debate about designer socialism hasn't emerged in Australia in quite the same form as in Britain is that for over three years our government has been by designer socialism — or rather, designer *post*-socialism. For most of the far left as for the Labor party, the rhetorical appeal of socialism (rarely very strong for either as practical ideal) died with the Whitlam government in 1975. Socialism, the feeling goes, isn't credible. The Americans, and probably the Australians, just wouldn't let us do it, and it wouldn't work if they did.

So Hawke's designer post-socialist regime has been experienced as an experimental form. It's quite as alienating and destructive to entrenched belief as any avant-garde work, yet it has sold itself, so far, as the epitome of consumer aesthetics, pop cultural flair, and hard-nosed marketing skill. Until recently, consensus politics was an on-going, entertaining serial based on criminal, sporting and financial intrigue, with a glittering cast of beautifully tailored and socially connected unionists, business leaders, lawyers, media moguls and prominent racing identities. In this context, a debate about whether *Dallas* is or is not progressive really is a bit of a side-show. The problem is rather what happens to politics, and to the political imagination, when the soaps, yuppy consciousness, and labor government merge.

IT'S QUITE DIFFICULT on the cultural left to seize the novelty of the Hawke regime — easy to feel that nothing can be the same again, but hard to say what's happened. That sense of baffled helplessness, of a radical loss of language to discuss the political process, is one of the products of the regime, and ironically one of its problems in securing credibility for the future.

The problem arises not only from what postmodernism calls the loss of faith in 'grand narratives' of emancipation (in everyday terms,

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the 'loss of a sense of direction'). An immediate source is the inflationary rhetoric that politicians and journalists have indulged in since Hawke began his run for power. For most of 1986, for example, we were tossed between stern warnings of doom and swashbuckling displays of machismo. In May, the Treasurer Paul Keating proclaimed Australia a 'banana republic'. By October, the remedies were falling into place 'like apples in a slot machine'. Whereupon he became, unforgettably, 'The World's Greatest Fruiterer'.

The media's remorseless scrutiny of metaphor is part of the Hawke period style. Labor hasn't simply governed by myth, as some of its critics say — progressively putting marketing ploys before the policies it began with, till policies disappear and only the ploys are left. It has governed by commentary on myth, by an openly entrepreneurial approach to its own investment in ploys. Through the media, yesterday's myths are discarded and tomorrow's proposed, complete with diagnoses, predictions, counter-proposals, charts of the market research, and comments from potential consumers. Today becomes an endless semiotics class while we're waiting for something to happen.

Of course, this development in itself is neither new nor unique to the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The situationists described something like it 20 years ago, and the international vogue for theories of postmodernism has at least the merit of recognising (unlike some marxisms) that here is no longer a tendency to be deplored, but a *fait accompli* to be dealt with. The difficulty for the Australian left is that the advent of such a regime coincides not only with Labor in power, but with entrenched unemployment, an inflation rate at twice the level of Australia's trading partners, an outmoded and inefficient industrial base, the halving of the dollar's value since Hawke came to power and (the factor most invisible amidst the sun and surf and seafood) a long-accumulating foreign debt exceeded now only, per capita, by Mexico and Brazil. A time when columnists mutter threats about the International Monetary Fund, when ideals of reform have been replaced by schemes for survival — and yet when style-as-substance erodes the credibility of schemes — is a very awkward time for the left to gain a hearing, or really know what to say.

The problem will be familiar to non-Australian readers. Visiting British leftists, with or without the stylistic commitments caricatured by Robert Elms, often warn their Australian counterparts to support Hawke, for fear of Thatcherism. Hawke is seen as a sort of Harold Wilson (the Whitlam and Fraser experiences getting lost in translation, along with many other differences). Thatcher is what happens next, a spectre haunting the future.

A common reply, at least in 'cultural' quarters, is to return the analogy. Hawke is a descendant of Wilson, with his avuncular styling and his flair for fixing the unions, but he's really a prototype for Kinnock (or an updated future model). And we already have a Thatcher in Paul Keating — head-kicking bully boy of upward mobility, high priest of free marketeering and voice of withering contempt for soft social-issue effeminates. For this line of argument, Thatcherism is not a spectre, but part of the reality of Labor practice. A more realistic reply, common among Australia's 'effective' intellectuals — bureaucrats, journalists, managers — is that, with all adjustments made and even allowing for Keating, the Britons are basically right. Beyond Labor lies a nightmare, not only because real Thatcherism is much worse than the simulated kind we've got. Labor has moved the spectrum of options so far right that the Liberals, who must show a saleable difference from Labor and need a coalition to govern, are vulnerable now to the ratbag right beyond Thatcher (like the Queensland Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen). The ratbag right has policies — flat not 'flatter' tax, large-scale dismantling of the modern state, moral normalisation, and a hex on Asians and bludgers*. It also has, you could say, a certain definite style.

IT MAY BE sensible to defend Labor, but the style wars aren't making it easy. The first-strike strategy of pre-empting the measures most painful to Labor's supporters makes the heroes look like the villains (while the myth machine maintains this glib mode of narrative thinking). Understandably, many people conclude like Robert Elms that, for designer post-socialism, the way things look is the way things are. The best defence Labor has at the moment is not the commitment of its supporters but the inept look of the Opposition.

The trouble is that old-style 'commitment' — and critical, not mythical, thinking — is what Labor keeps demanding from supporters to steer them out of the crisis, while its own stylistic genius is for leaving old commitments behind. Labor hasn't simply upset both drabbie and trendy lefties by defecting from its own feminist, aboriginal, environmental, ethnic and anti-nuclear policies, and nursing Rupert Murdoch towards a 75% control of metropolitan newspapers. It also seems to be in trouble with workers who (according to traditional wisdom and Labor market research) should only have wallets for brains. In NSW State by-elections at the end of January, Labor held power on preferences in two once 'safe' working-class seats, after a 20% swing against them on the primary vote. Incredibly, neither the press nor Labor expressed much concern. The local situation was unusual, and the Liberals also suffered a 10% loss of support.

It was left to the current affairs show *Four Corners* duly to do a poll, in which 77% of traditional Labor voters sampled from one of those electorates said they did not want to vote for their Federal member, Paul Keating.

The figure of Keating sums up the dilemmas emerging for the logic of new-look Labor. His Elms-like impatience with the social conscience left is the least of these, since it is in the grand historical tradition of the mainstream ALP. More serious is the build-up of a yuppy effect so strong that the visionary who fashioned Labor's claim to have become, at last, the party of economic management, now looks like the opportunist who managed Labor into big business politics, antique-store aesthetics and Marie Antoinette economics.

There is a fine line between the vision and the available opportunities, and Labor worked hard to persuade people that given current circumstances the political (as well as sartorial) tough-yuppy restyling of Labor would be in their best interests in the long run — since the old image to be discarded here was one of spendthrift frivolity, not flat caps and suet puddings. For a long time, the media gave Hawke and Keating starring roles in tandem as the gay blade and the grim reaper. The beloved Prime Minister, forsaking strong drink and fast women, promoted healthy lifestyle values by boosting morale at sporting events, while the feared but respected Treasurer brought the famed ascesis of his personal life to the running of national affairs.

It was a good routine while it lasted. But as the economic crisis deepened, the roles became a handicap in attempts to revise Labor's story of upward mobility for all. Hawke's matey exuberance looks weak and dated, while Keating's ascesis looks phony. When the Treasurer, svelte exponent of merciless taxation reforms, confessed last year that he'd been too 'busy' to file his own tax returns for two years running, the media staged a revival in the rhetoric of class betrayal — complete with surveys of his former working-class neighbours. The grim reaper was cut back to 'the boy from Bankstown' — and cast as the most hated character in the national soap (called here, not *EastEnders* but *Neighbours*).

To what extent is it 'merely' metaphorical to conflate fashion and politics in this way? I suspect that the question is a bit misleading, since the conflation itself has become part of the process of government, and the part most accessible to the public. Deciding whether the way things look is the way things are depends a lot on what you can see.

Some future historian of political culture under Hawke may well see, for example, that the distinctive pop genre to emerge has been the economics-showbiz column. As part of an admirable effort to turn dangerous enemies into fair-weather friends, and to raise public awareness of the way things are for a banana-becoming economy, the Labor regime has presided over an unprecedented fad for glossy business weeklies, TV stock-market gossip spots, and fanzine coverage of corporate birds of prey. Even Murdoch at Wapping and John Elliott trying to take over Tetley's Tea acquired an aura of *Crocodile Dundee* heroism, as though here was the hawk-like, swooping spirit that could save, if widely adopted, the Australian working-class dream.

Seeing this, it won't be surprising if more people than expected by the commentary professionals decide that the predatory policies of the ratbag right offer a swifter way than Labor to the same dreamy target. Nor will it be surprising if the fascination with the new stars of 'popular' vulture culture — Murdoch, Bond, Holmes a Court *et al* —outlasts their Labor promoters while the stars move on, as star destinies require, to still bigger and better parts.

What the left can do to survive this scenario is the real question, and the gratifying moments in *Dallas* aren't likely to be any more help than revivals in fashion-free militancy. Unless the left, in and out of Labor, can come up with economic and political programmes of some verisimilitude as well as popular appeal, we are likely to see ourselves, drab and glamorous alike, becoming as well as looking culturally obsolete. □

** **Bludger:** A sponger: Aus. low slang C.20*

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ARTS

PHOTOGRAPHY

Politics of colour

Liz Heron

Guatemala
JEAN MARIE SIMON *Photographers' Gallery*
The Tiger's Milk
FIONA MALCOLM and ADRIANA ANGEL
Photographers' Gallery
Lifetimes under Apartheid
NADINE GORDIMER and DAVID GOLDBLATT *Cape*
£15

PHOTOGRAPHERS HAVE BEEN trampled under horses' hooves at Wapping. There are pictures to prove it, though I've only seem them in union publications. Clashes with police and state at home hit the headlines and disappear; mostly, the visual drama of politics is elsewhere, its violence remote, its backdrop colourful. Reporting from Central America — image nexus of Third World struggle since the late Seventies — has reached the point where incoming journalists now have their own customs line at Managua airport.

Jean Marie Simon notes that this build-up of press exposure has left foreigners with only an 'opaque understanding' of the region. Distance makes things stark, but then can lead to numbing saturation. Titled simply **Guatemala** and culling work from assignments for magazines and human rights organisations over the last six years, her own exhibition aims to deliver 'the real story' by showing diversity. Its dynamic use of form and colour do confirm a bold photographic talent, but it, too, fails to remedy that lamented opacity.

There's an over-reliance on photo-journalistic presentation: the single photograph or a handful of images tell a 'story' on the page. The assumption here is that 60 such pictures will encapsulate a wider truth. But, unified only by the carefully composed formal drama of colour, texture and light, these have no coherent focus. Part folkloric travelogue, part socio-political commentary, the pictures veer between celebration and accusation, emphasising a land of contrasts: of poverty and beauty, brutality behind dark glasses and suppressed peasant resistance.

Colour itself is a problem in viewing these pictures. Its tendency to distract from everything but its own aesthetic still makes it suspect, shunned by some serious documentarists, despite the lure of the international magazine market. It's true that we've become used to it; it shocks and glamourises less than it did ten years ago. But here the high-key exoticism is meant to seduce the eye and other responses lag behind.

Simon's avowedly partisan stance is still that of the outsider and the professional — and in a foreign reportage tradition where women have always been rare. This month the Photographers' Gallery is given over to women and you can also see Fiona Malcolm and Adriana Angel's pictures of Nicaraguan women: **The Tiger's Milk**. They belong to a different tradition. Atmospherically lit and often shot in darkened interiors, these portraits speak of gentle intimacies between photographer and photographed.

'The bed of Velley Phakati, whose husband has gone away. The inscription on the pillow she embroidered reads, "Those who once met, will meet again." Soweto, 1972' (from David Goldblatt's accompanying text to *Lifetimes under Apartheid*)

But this lighting and intimate framing combine to produce a softened, romantic realism that dwells on inner qualities of endurance and dignity. Faces are observed obliquely, so that the photographer's admission to these private worlds hints at intrusion by the viewer. Too socially abstracted, the photographs sit curiously at odds with the expressed purpose of documenting women's active and changing role in a revolutionary society.

Neither of these projects succeeds in informing in the way apparently intended, though both are destined to appear as books, allowing for perhaps more clarity to emerge through editing and text. Their weaknesses recast some persistent questions about how Third World oppression and liberation struggles are represented, even where there's a will to convey political realities in a spirit of sympathy or solidarity. The camera constructs partial views of the world, and the accretion of images that landscape the cultural imagination and its real power relations inflect what we see.

Campaigning photography can cut through some of these dilemmas with overt didacticism — like the touring exhibition 'After the Dictators',* sponsored by War on Want as part of their 'Profits Out of Poverty' Campaign. Boosted by a 15-minute video, panels of text and photographs by Julio Etchart document the militancy of trade unions, women's organisations and peasants' associations in those South American countries economically blighted by debts to Western banks and governments.

Meanwhile, as photo-journalists queue up at Managua airport to flash the view from Reagan's backyard across the world, events in South Africa remain blanked out of sight, vivid only in the limbo of memory. From behind this curtain of silence one recently published book, **Lifetimes Under Apartheid**, achieves a remarkable eloquence. David Goldblatt's photographs lay bare the systematic divisions between white lives and black, the open vistas of white consumer affluence or farming on the Veldt against the narrow poverty of the townships and the 'homelands', and the bitterness of enforced family separations.

Scrupulously aware of their privileged view, these pictures never humiliate as they represent

**After the Dictators will be touring Bristol, Birmingham and Cardiff later this year; to hire, ring 01-620 1111.*

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International Women's Day rally in Santiago, Chile, photographed by Julio Etchart

desperate humiliations, resist the easy caricature of white oppression. They insist on the particular and the specific: names, places, details whose quotidian ordinariness bring home a world not alien but maintained by the most ruthless order and regulation. Goldblatt opts for a visual parity, a direct collaborative engagement, accepting what people offer to the camera, unless, like the exhausted men bussed hundreds of miles daily between work and their compulsorily resettled homes, they are too weary to look back at it. Extracts from Nadine Gordimer's fiction intimate a density and depth of experience to which the photographs only allude — though they never diminish.

It's this tangible strength of allusion, to whole lives and histories, intensely visible in things as well as faces, that gives these pictures their power; bunks in a miners' compound; a squatters' plastic shelter; a pillow embroidered by a woman whose husband has gone away — 'Those who once met, will meet again'. The power to move; to thought as well as feeling. □

THEATRE

The dispossessed

Victoria Radin

A View from the Bridge
ARTHUR MILLER *National Theatre*
The Story of Yours
JOHN HOPKINS *Hampstead Theatre*

ALAN AYCKBOURN's production of Arthur Miller's **A View from the Bridge** is one of the finest events to be presented at the National Theatre since it moved to the South Bank. It is fluent, authentic and nearly unbearably moving. The combination of this director, whom we know in London for his productions of his own well-knitted little jumpers of comedies designed for avoiding the cold, with this big, naked and very American play is unlikely. But Ayckbourn's last play, *A Woman in Mind*, showed him moving — if not quite running — to something bigger and darker. *A View from the Bridge* not only suggests that he has made an enormous leap, but that he is one of the very finest directors Britain has to offer.

It also enables Michael Gambon, who once made his mark as a player of Acykbourn's drab suburbanites, to leap his own fence to greatness. And it introduces to a London audience a host of wonderful new performers. The ensemble feeling that they generate is very important for this family drama.

Arthur Miller initially wrote it as a one-act play in verse; the version that we have now, two acts in prose, is the one that received its premiere, curiously enough, here, in London, in 1956. It is a big and emotional work, set among first- and second-generation Italians in Brooklyn, at a time when the men scraped a subsistence living as longshoremen. Miller shows them to be a volatile and — for the generation which has thrown off the old country's way of *bel canto* and fountains in the square, without absorbing the new ones — a completely uncultured group. But he does not patronise them. These people are decent and good-willed and we accept them on their own terms. When tragedy comes upon them, they are just as aware of its steady encroachment on their lives as we are.

It comes in the form of the growing up of Catherine, the 17-year-old-niece of the Carbones, who have brought up the orphaned child as if she were their daughter. She is not a daughter however; and when the paternal love of Eddie Carbone (Gambon) changes into an illicit sexual passion, it is all the more powerful and naked for not being strictly incestuous.

Miller prepares the ground carefully in palpable stages. First there is Eddie's mildly perplexing opposition to Catherine's first job; then his failure to receive the two younger male illegal immigrants from Italy, whom he is to house, with his usual affability. He breaks off the rendition of 'Paper Doll' by Rodolfo, the younger of the two arrivals, just as it reaches its climax. We know immediately that Catherine will fall for the unusually blond, good-humoured and extrovert Rodolfo — whose skills at working, singing, cooking, even dressmaking, coupled with an ability to make everyone around him happy, would endow him in anyone's eyes but Eddie's with the qualities of an ideal husband. Eddie's objections to him, based on something not completely known even to himself, must therefore be canny. They move from the possibly rational, if mean-minded, thought that the boy is only interested in Catherine's passport, to the irrational notion that Rodolfo 'isn't right' — or is homosexual. They conclude in the kiss he plants in turn on Catherine and Rodolfo, ostensibly to demonstrate his theory. That act is the result of a thinking process which Miller has minutely documented as the logical outcome of an illogical hatred and jealousy. From there it is a small step to Eddie's final transgression, the act of shopping the boys to the Immigration Department.

The last sound we hear is an extended animal moan coming from Beatrice Carbone as Marco delivers his fatal revenge to her husband. Ayckbourn's production is filled with extra-textual cries: the bleat of the foghorns, the tap of typewriters, the human laughs and sobs and lowings of an atmospherically-conceived play in which the author has even written in the smell of a coffee shipment. The part of Beatrice is thoughtfully imagined: she is a kind of ironic anchor, long-suffering but unself-pitying, and Elizabeth Bell realises it fully. Adrian Rawlins' engaging Rodolfo gives just a hint of how Eddie's suspicions could be justified; while Michael Simkins offers a wholly convincing portrait of the macho Marco, fleshing out his silences with apparent thought. Suzan Sylvester, in the difficult role of Catherine, is dead accurate, moving from the little 'baby' or 'madonna' of Eddie's idealised view to a harsh-voiced and independent defender of her own rights. The way she holds on to his coat, and then his face as Eddie embraces her, makes it clear that she is implicated in Eddie's madness — a madness whose every new excrescence Gambon makes us see precisely. And Gambon's Eddie — standing and slowly taking in the knowledge that Catherine and Rodolfo have been making love, then giving a long moan and beginning to weep and, after the kiss, collapsing in hysterical laughter, flinging a chair about like a weapon — shows a courageously inventive performance, which is big without ever going over the top. Even with his slicked-back hair, moustache, belly and reasonably plausible accent, Gambon's lightness and odd physical particularity would make him no one's idea of the perfect Italian Brooklyn longshoreman; but this superb actor somehow

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uses his oddness and inappropriateness to invest Eddie with an even greater humanity. When he wrote *A View from the Bridge*, Miller was formulating his ideas for modern tragedy; in this production this passionate play achieves that status.

A kind of tragedy may be perhaps what John Hopkins had in mind for **The Story of Yours**, first aired in 1968. The results, however, are merely titillating, rather in the fashion of a thriller: I quite envied Jane Wood's policeman's wife when she went offstage for a few moments to be sick with disgust. We're trapped in the mind of an ugly psychopath — whose illicit sexual yearnings are a more disturbed form of Eddie's, though he has nothing of that man's charm, nor Hopkins Miller's honesty about permitting us to know him. Directed by Jack Gold, an excellent cast including David Suchet as the degraded copper and Bryan Pringle and James Hazeldine, the latter shockingly apt, as his opponents, apply themselves with vigour to the play, which comes 12 years after Miller's but seems much more old-fashioned. It doesn't deserve such fine work. □

CINEMA

Skin trade

Judith Williamson

Soul Man (PG)
Cannons Haymarket, Oxford St, Edgware Rd, Fulham, Bayswater

IT MUST BE TOUGH being a white, middle-class male. Not only is it politically fashionable to be oppressed like women or blacks, but subordinate cultures seem like so much more fun; what's more, the very idea of positive discrimination makes some of those in traditionally dominant groups actually feel anxious about being discriminated *against*.

This bundle of feelings may account for what might be called the *Tootsie* Syndrome: the wish to be in an oppressed group rather than that of the boring old oppressors. On one level the film *Tootsie* can be read as an exposé of sexism: by 'becoming' a woman, the Dustin Hoffman character experiences sexual discrimination first hand (he's called demeaning names like Tootsie, for example). This could be seen as a way of drawing attention to the whole issue.

But if films, like dreams, also function as the expression of a wish, then the desire to 'take over' being a woman (and make a better job of it than real women do) can be seen as the film's underlying dynamic, and this wish has much to do with the advances made by feminism. For women have a justification for righteous anger denied to their oppressors, and to 'be' one provides one way of expressing the sense of unfairness which, in the plot of *Tootsie*, the male actor feels at finding there are no male parts available for him.

Soul Man takes the Tootsie Syndrome into the realm of race. Its central character, Mark Watson, is a white boy whose wealthy parents refuse to pay for him to go to Harvard Law School and who darkens his skin with suntan tablets in order to win a black scholarship. At Harvard he meets the young black woman Sarah who should have been the recipient of the scholarship and is working to pay her way through school and support her child. Mark falls in love with Sarah, eventually owns up, goes through a mock 'trial' at the Law School, punches the WASP preppies who make racist jokes in the canteen, and finally overcomes Sarah's resistance to mixed marriages; as in *Tootsie*, romance is offered as the ultimate resolution.

Shades of white in *Soul Man*

And, as in *Tootsie*, *Soul Man*'s narrative takes us through an enormous number of situations where the details of day-to-day prejudice and discrimination are shown up vividly and effectively. As a black student, Mark is an unwelcome tenant and his landlord tries to find excuses to evict him, while his daughter Whitney chases him with all the coloniser's avidness for a bit of the Other, claiming to have felt 'four hundred years of anger and oppression in every pelvic thrust' after they make love. When basketball teams are picked, everyone wants Mark on their side.

While all this appears to expose a variety of racist attitudes, the film functions partly through the very assumptions it purports to condemn. Mark, really white, *isn't* good at basketball; the 'real' black player is. After being black for a while, Mark's taste in music changes: when his best friend asks, 'Do you really hate the Beach Boys now?' he replies, 'Well, I guess I still like some of their funkier stuff.' The film certainly draws attention to crudely racist assumptions (there is a dinner sequence where each member of Whitney's family is shown to have a different fantasy about Mark — the mother sees him as a rapist, the father as a pimp, the son as a pop star) but these only serve to conceal its own.

For while the film's overt narrative function is to show what black people are up against, its deeper theme — the *Tootsie* analysis — is that of envy. The movie contains a structure of parallels and comparisons which suggest that it *is*, in many ways, nicer to be black and poor than white and rich. Mark's well-off Californian parents are presented as total neurotics, swayed by the dictates of his father's grotesquely parodied therapist. Sarah's family, on the other hand, are warm and supportive, care for her child, and are enormously proud of her achievement. This may on one level be a realistic comparison but the way it is structured into the film leaves one in no doubt that Mark is a 'poor little rich kid'. The fact that the only scholarship money available for the school is for blacks further fuels the sense of envy, while his desire for Sarah also, in a sense, puts him in the subordinate, pleading position, at her mercy.

Mark's underdog role continues at his trial where his best friend pleads for him: 'Can we blame him for the colour of his skin [i.e. white]? Despite his upbringing, my client may still become a useful member of society . . .' The language usually heard in liberal defence of the underprivileged is here mobilised on behalf of the white man. The combination of all these factors seems to echo a quite real feeling, both of an emptiness in the dominant culture and a sense that some of those within it have of being hard-done-by.

Soul Man is interesting precisely because of the contradictory relationship between its 'message' of anti-racism and its driving emotion of envy. The device of pretending to be in a particular group in order to highlight its oppression has a long history. In Elia Kazan's 1947 film *Gentleman's Agreement* Gregory Peck plays a gentile journalist who pretents to be Jewish in order to research anti-semitism; more recently the German journalist Günter Walraff has pretended to be a migrant worker in order to write about the experience from the inside. Yet, somewhere in this drive to *be* (rather than *listen to*) the oppressed, is yet again the impulse of the coloniser to take over whatever he is not.

In both *Tootsie* and *Soul Man* it is the white male who is the source of knowledge about women and

TRAILERS

The Second Southampton Film Festival opens on 26 February and features soon to be reviewed new releases *Gothic, The Colour of Money, The Fly*; rarely shown films like Paradjanov's *The Colour of Pomegranates*; recent favourites like the magical and moving *Ginger and Fred*; and many more. Venues at cinemas all over Southampton. For tickets phone 0703-330729.

The Plymouth Arts Centre holds a day school on Race and the Media on 21 February; details on 0752-660060.

The Tyneside Cinema's regional premiere of *Alpine Fire*, Fredi Murer's extraordinary film about an intense and isolated family in the Swiss alps, reaches its last days on 20 and 21 February. Details from 091-232 1507.

The London Film Makers' Co-op holds an open screening on 24 February, inviting 16mm, super-8 film, 35mm slides from anyone who wishes to show them. Their Cinema of the Body season continues on 20 and 21 February with Franju's atmospheric *Les Yeux Sans Visages* showing on the Saturday night. Details on 01-586 4806.

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WORK IN PROGRESS

The big sleep

Naseem Khan

A DARKENED auditorium at Wyndham's Theatre. Nothing on stage but a row of black wooden chairs, empty and waiting. For what? A nervous rustle of Maltesers to my right. 'We're sitting in the wrong place,' hisses the man behind me anxiously. 'You know he comes and drags people out of the audience . . .'

In the past it was magicians and healers who attracted this sort of edgy, fearful excitement. And now . . . The music starts — eerie moans developing into a rather ominous disco beat — and a voice over the soundtrack announces, 'Ladies and gentlemen, the world's most unique entertainer . . .!'

Andrew Newton is a hypnotist, the first to be allowed to perform in London since 1952. Local regulations used to forbid public displays of hypnosis since, as Newton's agent put it afterwards, disgusting things happened like pins being stuck into oblivious volunteers. Outside the capital (where people are apparently more thick-skinned), Newton has drawn crowds ever since his first accidental debut in a pub in Leeds when the landlord passed round a hat. ('He gave me £35 and said could I come again.')

The build-up suggests the advent of something truly amazing. In fact Newton looks pretty ordinary — no razzle-dazzle suit or manic Eyes of Power. In his navy blazer, dark trousers (a hint of flares) and sober shirt and tie, he could be just what he was before his apotheosis — a 25-year-old percussionist in a northern orchestra. A pale, slightly-built man, his style is brisk rather than mesmeric.

It will be 'interesting, informative and entertaining, pleasant and relaxing,' he promises us, walking up and down the stage with his handmike clutched like an ice-cream. 'It's impossible to hypnotise someone who doesn't want to be.' He asks for 12 volunteers and then exits. Ah, I thought, this will be like those discussions after fringe theatre: full of embarrassed silence and no one going forward. Not a bit of it. No sooner had Newton gone than there were people legging it up onto the stage, eager to get the 12 chairs (all young and all but two men).

Up and down the seated row walks Newton, tipping each person's head back in turn and then, their eyes closed, forward again. 'Nice deep breaths. Super . . . Breathe regularly and deeply.' A faint lyrical guitar wafts out of the speakers. 'You're tired, tired.' Back and forth behind them he walks, and in no time they are all asleep. The first trance lasts mere minutes (and two emerge spontaneously before that) and then Newton wakes each in turn. How was it, he asks. Good, they all say. He asks them their jobs. Students, not surprisingly, make up the largest proportion. Of the first two girls, one is a student, the other a barmaid. There's a gardener, a carpenter, someone 'in property' and a young Scot, 'Dundee', who insists his job is to 'enjoy myself'.

For the next two hours or so, the volunteers seem indeed to be enjoying themselves, while the audience whoops with laughter at their antics. The volunteers find themselves entwined in each others' arms; they act out instruments in a silly puppet orchestra; they furiously spur on invisible horses in a race each desperately wants to win. 'Are you with friends?' Newton asks Dundee, whom he's singled out to lock into an absurd stance. 'Unfortunately, yes,' he replies ruefully, one hand coquettishly on his hip, the other helplessly high in the air. Click go Newton's fingers, and Dundee's hand instantly drops back into sleep.

Is it a fix? the hacks asked each other in the interval. Were the volunteers primed? Certainly some had looked curiously un-nervous, but then so do many of the people who set themselves up for public derision on machines like the Rotor at the funfair. On the other hand, their reactions were so convincingly natural (down to blushes) it was hard to believe it was all put on. Just as confusing are the ethics of the occasion. Newton treads carefully, but there's nevertheless something dubious about it all. The audience howls and the participants seem pleased, but there's no getting away from the fact that we are laughing at people being made to look hopelessly stupid. The only saving grace is their astounding good nature.

The disappointing thing about Newton's act is its banality. People fall asleep, wake up, believe they are talking to live parrots or are Elvis Presley or are overcome with sadness. But it's all on one level, parlour tricks — and by its very nature, unless Newton is extremely sharp, repetitive. Only one trick dug out something a bit more interesting. When they woke up, Newton told his sleeping bunch, they would be the world's greatest liars. When they woke, he talked to each in turn, and distinctive flights of the imagination began to appear, from accounts of having done hush-hush work in the Falklands to being Dolly Parton's boyfriend; young Dundee looked Newton firmly in the eye and claimed to be Andrew Newton. For an instant it looked as if the tables might be turned, but no, click went the fingers and back they all went to sleep.

There's no doubt, in its way, it is a cause for wonder. The audience is asked to link both hands above its heads and shut its eyes. Around 20 find they are unable to unlock them. One of them, taken up on stage, collapses backwards in a deep sleep. 'Oh shit,' she is heard to say as she goes. A mysterious and rather unnerving spectacle, maybe the only safe reaction is to laugh. Anyone can do it, says Andrew Newton. Thank god they don't. □

Next week: Work in Progress looks at channels for black literature.

blacks respectively, allowing him to remain bang at the centre of things while also appearing to understand perfectly the situation of those who are not. Which goes for the audience too. For of course *Soul Man* invites a white audience to identify with Mark identifying with a black kid, who is the object of discovery, rather than the subject of the film. Well-meaning as this film may be, what it really reveals is the reluctance of dominant social groups to let go their control of knowledge. Or, more simply, how hard some people find it just to shut up and listen. □

TELEVISION

Brush with Jesus

Hugo Williams

AT ITS BEST TV aspires to the back of a cornflakes packet: Did You Know That . . .? Some Interesting Facts About . . . A sort of coffee-table freakshow for the family. You sit there with your eyes popping out of your head and your cheeks bulging with cornflakes . . . in one hole and out the other. God, listen to this . . .

That was me last Wednesday watching *The Foolish Wise Ones* on **Q.E.D.** (BBC1). It was the perfect going-to-work conversation material: just mention the programme and lapse into a mutual incredulous reverie as you joggle along on the bus. There was this autistic boy who can't add eight and seven who has got a 100-year calendar stuck on a wall somewhere inside his head. 'It was a Mun Die' he said to enquiries for the day of the week, or 'It was a Sun Die', and there was this kid with an IQ of 60 who can reproduce any tune you play him, complete with left hand, and another one obsessed with London buildings, a brilliant instinctive draughtsman aged ten who scorns the trick of shading in his easy grasp of volume and scale, though he memorised St Pancras back to front. What could such a programme do but present these wonders, mutter something irrelevant about computers and the source of genius and leave us to stare silently out of our bus windows next morning. 'It was a Thurs Die . . .'

'We have tried to explain that our paintings represent *all* this vast Australia, but the white Australians don't understand, they just want to take them away for souvenirs.' The last chapter in the much-slagged **State of the Art** (C4) finally owned up to what it really wanted to talk about: the survival of cultural identity in the international melting pot. It was the most interesting one I saw.

Aboriginal painter Michael Nelson Tjakmarra sits out in the blazing desert sun to paint his abstractions. He is painting what he sees, even if his dots and arrows are not what you or I would make of it. Black New Yorker Jean-Michael Basquiat was a subway graffiti artist until New York art-lovers expressed their desire to take his work home with them. He is now installed under a Manhattan gallery with enough clean canvasses to keep him off the streets. He had eight one-man shows of defaced hoardings last year and is now a friend of Andy Warhol. 'Some do it with a bitter look, some with a flattering word.'

I wish I believed that refined Scotch voice when it claimed that Warhol and Basquiat had made art of what few others would dare, by defacing their

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own art, effectively scribbling on the corporate face, but my eyes told me they were only scribbling. The programme confused genuine artists like Tjakamarra with primitive activists and publicists like Warhol, Basquiat and some of the black London artists presented here. But it made you think.

'We've reached a point in history where trying to stay out of the mainstream is going to be like clinging to a rock in a flood,' said the final speaker in *State of the Art*. The image of the mainstream flood is sadly appropriate to the fate of the Sanema tribe, as described in **The Search for Eldorado** (BBC1). The Sanema are one of the most remote, independent and feared of all the Amazonian Indians, or were until Pastor Hernan Artigas came to Majawana with his good news from the world beyond the jungle. 'Our way of speaking will pass away, all our descendants will be proper Venezuelans. We'll be just like the foreigners. That's fine.' (Mariano, the first Christian Sanema.)

We've seen it all before, but these poor people, who barely distinguish themselves from the animals, all of whom have souls like them, seemed especially undeserving of the good Pastor's attentions. The mystery is not so much in their own wild and wonderful customs: head-banging, hallucinogenic snuff-taking, noisy spirit warfare; we've all taken part in that sort of thing, even if we have had to give it up recently for health reasons. No, it's easy enough to see what the Sanema scene has got going for it. What's harder to understand is the attraction of Pastor Hernan's breeze-block chapel, halting pidgin translations and runway hacked from virgin rain forest. It's what comes in on that runway that gives him his charisma. We are all surrounded by cargo cults of one kind or another; Paster Hernan's is more than usually brazen, his mission acting as a trade store for the greater good of Christianity.

'I want to become a Christian so I can have goods, money and knowledge,' said his prize convert. 'We want to work like foreigners, so we can get hold of money.' Even the unenlightened had caught on to the cult's general drift: 'I don't have a machete, a cooking pot or an axe, so how can I be happy?' How indeed.

Human nature is on the side of Pastor Hernan: God = goodies. Thanks to his teaching, the Sanema are now prepared to exchange a year's supply of skins and basketware for the said happiness. The Venezuelan government entrusts the mission to conduct the school and the school has exactly the same curriculum as schools in Caracas, encouraging Indians to think of themselves as Venezuelan patriots, albeit third-class ones. 'Young as I am,' said a Sanema, 'I don't think our stories are true, the written word in the Bible is the truth.' When the young men of the tribe come to school instead of going hunting they are rewarded with a toothbrush and some toothpaste.

Armchair Theatre: A Night Out (C4) was something of a contradiction in terms, but felt more like an armchair finally. Harold Pinter's first play for television read like an alien's notebook of weird colloquialisms and speech rhythms, but the baffled, indulgent acting of Tom Bell completely failed to pull it into any kind of convincing case history of a misogynistic mother's boy or whatever. It topped the ratings in 1960. □

Books

'And finally raise and straighten the arm at an angle of approximately 45 degrees, repeating after me, "Sea kale, sea kale, sea kale."' Speaker class in the women's section of the BUF, 1934

PATRIOTS

The right track

Nigel Fountain

Fascism In Britain: A History, 1918-1985
RICHARD THURLOW *Blackwell* £16

DOES BRITISH FASCISM matter? Continental varieties cost us a generation; the domestic version cost lives — and still does — but its supporters have always been few in number, its intellectual roots shallow, and its lasting impact on society apparently minimal. Throughout Thurlow's informative and irritating book the British State sails on, outwardly safe from the dud torpedoes fired by social outcasts and the occasional mutiny on the upper decks.

And what a shoddy crowd those outcasts and mutineers were, and are. Rotha Lintorn Orman, sectarian and increasingly drunken founder of the Twenties 'British Fascisti' (later the British Fascists); Arnold Leese, the anti-semitic veterinary surgeon whose mental insights located Sir Oswald Mosley as a 'kosher fascist', whose legacy of ideas and cash fuelled the National Front and the other warring tribes of post-war fascism; and the heirs themselves, Colin Jordan, Martin Webster and John Tyndall, whose personal enmities eventually outweighed and overturned their activism. Around them, across six decades, cluster a host of anonymous figures with double-barrelled names and half-baked ideas. Towering above them all, like the sports master at a peculiarly seedy prep school, is the figure of Mosley himself, whose activities and ideas unsurprisingly dominate the book.

But the unpromising nature of the human stock — to borrow from the trade's language — doesn't explain British fascism's failure in the Thirties. Across the English Channel fascism could and did draw on a richer intellectual tradition. From 1789 onwards there were plenty of outgroups of the old ruling classes cultivating strange blooms as industrialisation fertilised the continent. But there were plenty of the shoddy arrivistes too. The Ribbentrops and Goebbels, Doriots and Lavals had similar charms to those of their failed British — or more usually English — counterparts.

The author wrestles with explanations. Mosley was the 'sawdust Caesar' or, more flatteringly, the 'deeply flawed hero' with Faustian dreams and thugs for pals; a 'poor judge of events' with, thank God, 'wretched luck in the Thirties'. Thus are poor choices of companions and lack of organisational skills wheeled out. So too is the impact of the withdrawal of support by Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* in the wake of the British Union of Fascists' bloody rally at Olympia in September 1934. This, suggests Thurlow, rendered Mosley a political unperson until the late Sixties. Then, of course, his brand of the indiscreet charm of the bourgeoisie became increasingly apparent again to people of breeding and taste. But through the tumult in those days the government of Stanley Baldwin — imbued it should be added with the certainties of 300 years of British ruling-class continuity and cohesion — ploughed imperviously through the waves, deftly swamping Mosley's ketch and his queasy crew in its wake.

It isn't enough. When dealing with Mosley, his

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precursors, contemporary rivals and successors, Thurlow sticks to an alternately intriguing and wearisome catalogue of their doings and philosophising. But what is largely missing is a recognition of the unfolding role of the global slump that triggered European fascism. Quack ideas are ten a penny, Hitlers grow on trees; not many of them and not that often fall into seats of government. They did so for a time because fascists on the streets borrowing leftist organisational techniques, mouthing half-sense and nonsense and killing and terrorising socialists and communists made sense to rulers — and some of the ruled — scared of the alternative.

But in Britain, as the author notes in passing, things were different. 'The failure of the General Strike in 1926,' he writes, 'marked the end of any possibility that extra-parliamentary forms of left-wing politics could alter effectively the economic policy of the government.' There I suggest is the key to the failure of British fascism in the Thirties. The revolutionary wave after 1917 *worried* our rulers, it did not dislodge them.

But crucially the collapse of the General Strike meant that a central function of continental fascism had been achieved even before the decade dawned. Thus the defection of Mosley from the mainstream, first to the New Party — an interlude briefly touched on by the author — and then to the BUF, took place after the effective defeat of the organised working class. Having assembled a Blackshirted group of huntsmen and women to chase the fox, he discovered — or rather ignored — that in reality Baldwin had already and unsportingly shot or at least caged the animal. Who needed Mosley of the staring eyes and seedy friends?

Not that Mosley lacked lofty ideals. The author somewhat generously delineates his central aims as the avoidance of a repetition of the Great War and the making of a better world, 'far from ignoble aims' — publicly shared, I read somewhere, by the then leader of Germany. Continuing with his even-handed approach to his central character we are assured that Sir Oswald would not have been a Quisling had 1940 gone the other way; was initially spurred to fascist methods by the impact of a brick on his mental processes at a 1931 New Party rally, and was 'genuinely puzzled by growing Jewish hostility to the BUF'. His intellectual curiosity spurred him to send A.K. Chesterton on an errand to probe the 'influence of Jews on British society'.

Thurlow's digging in the archives and Intelligence reports does illuminate the workings of the BUF and its lesser rivals. Brixton's BUF was enterprisingly organised as a brothel; anti-vivisectionists seemed to have played a noticeable role in the movement and, yes, Mussolini did fund the BUF in its formative days. And there is the curious figure of Archibald Maule Ramsay, anti-semite of a virulent strain, Nazi fellow-traveller and Tory MP, interned in 1940 together with other fascist 'victims' —the author's term — of the government's fishing expedition.

Despite his postwar come-backs Mosley's erratic star had virtually been extinguished by the war years. It was left to the members of crazed and endlessly changing groupuscules to carry the burden through the lean years of the Fifties and Sixties into the more fruitful times of the Seventies. And those that did, as Thurlow details, were largely drawn from the tradition of Arnold Leese's brand of 'racial nationalism', more suburban, devoid of charisma, and briefly in the last decade more effective. Sucked into the orbit were the survivors of the wreckage of the BUF. A.K. Chesterton, loyal Mosleyite, teamed up with the National Front in the Sixties, and the residual East End fascist tradition survives to this day, with lethal effects on the newer targets of racism.

Those boom days of the Seventies crumbled, of course. Hit by the Anti-Nazi League — to which the author pays grudging homage from his nesting place in consensus academia — drained by Thatcherism, the NF stumbled into the Eighties with splits and defections into rival groupings, accompanied by organised and random violence. British fascism has always been overrated, suggests Thurlow, and, in a sense he's right; from Lintorn Orman to Joe Pearce it has remained a might-have-been. But then so has a revitalised British economic machine. And, amidst the rust, the ghost lingers unexocised. Fascism matters. □

Nigel Fountain is co-editor of City Limits *magazine.*

BIOGRAPHY

A life in pictures

Mandy Merck

Marilyn
GLORIA STEINEM with photographs by GEORGE BARRIS *Gollancz* £12.95

IT ISN'T SURPRISING that Marilyn Monroe remembered her life like a Hollywood movie. Her mother, Gladys Baker Mortensen, worked in the lab at LA's Consolidated Film Industries. There — according to this account — she met Marilyn's father, who bore a considerable resemblance to Clark Gable. Some writers maintain that Marilyn was originally named Norma Jeane after Talmadge and Harlow. And, in her unfinished autobiography, published as *My Story*, she described Gladys' loss of her first two children in the classic terms of a King Vidor melodrama.

Cockroaches

Fiona Pitt-Kethley

The Stalls crowd eating salmon at the bar
suspected nothing of the teeming mass,
a cast of thousands underneath the fridge
that held their ices for the interval —
their chocolate, strawberry and vanilla tubs.
One night, some careless usher dropped his change;
we had to move the thing to get it up.
Out came the cockroaches, big, little, large
by ones and twos at first, dazed by the lights,
they straggled on. Then came a seething crowd —
returning veterans from Waterloo.
We left the room, lacking the killer drive.
The crackling-creaking-rustling quickly stopped.
They'd all returned to their ancestral home.

In time, some trendy so-and-so decreed,
(ignoring the past visits of the Thames),
the basement decor needed livening up.
He had it done in smart brown hessian
to show off theatre prints — costume designs
from plays — grey aluminum-framed, for sale.
The thirties paintwork was all covered up,
and things got warmer. He'd not bargained for
the insects having his same sense of taste —
brown sacking — just what any roach would love.
They did too. What a Spring they had — up, down,
and round about — they even did things by
the cloakroom hatch, rode on velvet jackets,
drowned in gin.

Fiona Pitt-Kethley's new collection, Private Parts, *will be published by Chatto in June.*

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When, after tracing them and their father to a second marriage in Kentucky, she discovered that they were 'living in a fine house', Gladys didn't ask to see her children. 'Like the mother in the movie *Stella Dallas*,' Marilyn explained, 'she went away and left them to enjoy a happier life than she could give them.'

Monroe's métier was the sex comedy, not the melodrama, and her image — despite the notoriously pneumatic breasts — anything but maternal. Those critical taxonomies which oppose her to wholesome blondes like Doris Day ignore the self-parody in both their performances, but much of that was lost on the children of the Fifties. Gloria Steinem remembers being embarrassed as a teenager watching the star on screen, 'mincing and whispering and simply hoping her way into love and approval'. Some of us were just scared. Marilyn Monroe seemed a man's woman, first and foremost, with a specifically heterosexual attractiveness polished to such a high gloss that it threatened to leave the rest of us in the dark — unless we too accepted the corsetting and cosmetics and constraints that this femininity required.

Yet in the quarter-century since her death Monroe has become a tragedienne and, recently, a figure reclaimed for feminism. It's amazing what death can do for a girl. Among other things, it's a prerequisite for martyrdom. The taste for hagiography runs rampant in the modern women's movement and, if a star is torn, she becomes a suitable case, like Janis and Bessie and Judy, for canonisation.

The talent and the tragedy of these women's lives may be indisputable, but so is the current emphasis on the second term at the expense of the first. Despite the lip-service to Monroe's concern for her craft, Steinem is much more interested in 'the endlessly vulnerable child who looked out of Marilyn's eyes'. Suitably infantilised, Monroe's life can be rendered as one of persecuted innocence — the classic melodrama scenario — in which poverty, desertion, sexual abuse and narcotics take their terrible toll.

Sadly, all of these things probably happened to Marilyn Monroe, although Steinem's efforts to verify conflicting stories (including those of her subject) are unimpressive. Despite the addition of photojournalist George Barris' unpublished interview from Monroe's last summer of '62, this is a compilation of secondary sources, designed to supplement the scores of photographs taken by Barris and his predecessors over the years. As such, it occupies a peculiar place in the literature of stardom, a sort of moral fanzine or consecrated coffee-table book.

This is a difficult balance to maintain, threatening to topple over into the unfeminist eroticism of the pin-up on the one hand (the famous calendar nude is notably absent) and the *Hollywood Babylon* death scene on the other (only one black and white of Monroe's dishevelled bedroom is included). In between, the book displays a large number of Barris' contrived candids (Marilyn playing on the beach, sticking her tongue out, leaning on her elbow) which, given the rounded contours of her 36-year-old face and figure, do look rather childlike. They reminded me strongly of the redeemed stripper in *Not A Love Story*, also filmed draped with seaweed at the end of her odyssey through the porn industry. In both cases the subjects seem to have lost, along with their exposure to the skin trade, the wit and intelligence they employed against it.

In this book Steinem confesses to a fantasy of saving Monroe from her tragic fate, and also to an interest in (strictly non-Freudian) psychology. The much-disparaged Freud would have reminded her that the jealous child's desire to rescue mother from the degradation of sex with daddy also includes a measure of revenge. In appropriating Marilyn Monroe to the conventions of melodrama, in which suffering becomes the major evidence of merit, we may be paying one of the most influential actresses of our century a rather mean tribute. □

Mandy Merck is editor of Screen, *the journal of the Society for Education in Film and Television.*

PUBLISHING

Popular front

Robin Blackburn

Victor Gollancz: A Biography
RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS *Gollancz* £20

WITHIN ITS AMPLE covers this 782-page work contains at least two and a half books: an account of the rise and fall of the Left Book Club, with special reference to Victor Gollancz; a company history of Victor Gollancz, the publishers; and last, but by no means least, a detailed portrait of Victor Gollancz, the radical publicist and moralist. Each of the books has a definite interest; together they yield a vivid portrait of an epoch in the development of the British Left — a portrait which, whether wittingly or not, challenges received wisdom.

But the aspect of the greatest general interest is undoubtedly the account of the Left Book Club. Gollancz became the impresario of the British version of the Popular Front with the creation of the Club in 1936. At its height the Club had 57,000 members, organised in 1,200 branches; they received the monthly 'choice' and could participate in their local branch or in a number of ancillary organisations such as the LBC Theatre Guild. With Gollancz, John Strachey and Harold Laski as editors the Club published popularisations of socialism, exposés of working-class conditions in Britain, glowing accounts of life in the Soviet Union and reports on the rise of fascism and the struggle against it. Over a three-year period Gollancz sold 5,000,000 Club editions. He also spoke at numberless meetings in every part of the country.

The Club was not intellectually demanding and made a scant contribution to socialist philosophy or theory. But it did publish superlative works of popular political economy, history and reportage: Strachey's pamphlets, Ellen Wilkinson's *The Town They Murdered* (a searing indictment of what had been done to Jarrow), A. L. Morton's highly influential *People's History of England*, Jellinek's inspirational account of the Paris Commune and Edgar Snow's prophetic classic *Red Star over China*. The socialist politics encouraged by the Club had a down-to-earth, empirical and moralistic character; its offerings in the area of culture criticism were sparse and often philistine. There were no Club editions of Caudwell. Gollancz had many contacts amongst German emigrés but showed no interest in such as Adorno, who spent a couple of years at Oxford, Marcuse, who published his first work in English with a London publisher in 1940, or Karl Korsch, who published a biography of Marx in English in 1938.

For a time the Club acted as the most successful of Party front organisations. Gollancz explained that he would not accept any criticism of Stalin or the Soviet Union since this would harm the anti-fascist front. Trotsky ceased to be a Gollancz author. Leonard Woolf and Brailsford were asked to remove criticism of the Moscow trials or their books would not be published. A book by Thalheimer was dropped, at Party insistence, because he had fallen out of favour in Moscow. Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* was published by the Club but *Homage to Catalonia*, his best book and one of the few not to be marred by condescension and plain man's demagogy, was turned down. Gollancz, yielding nothing of his claims to be animated by the most absolute moral standards, publicly denied that the Party sought to influence his editorial decisions, or that he would take any notice of it if it did.

Yet there was a sense in which Gollancz was right to deny that the LBC was a simple Party front. In inception and in its destiny the Club was independent of the Party; in no other country was

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there a 'front' as autonomous and as successful as this. While Gollancz supplied the promotional flair and a taste for direct writing, Strachey had already elaborated an impressive critique and strategy in his *Coming Struggle for Power*. The Party did not 'mastermind' the LBC, indeed its direct interventions were generally unfortunate. But Harry Pollitt does emerge with credit as someone who was happy for Gollancz and his co-editors to invent a movement that would cater to the 'hunger for Marxism' he detected among the Club's young following.

The wealth of documentation supplied by Ruth Dudley Edwards not only helps to fill in the familiar picture of 'fellow-travelling' but also to qualify and correct it. Her account makes clear that the LBC did develop a momentum of its own. Popular Front organisations were meant to become broad by limiting themselves to a moderate minimum programme, or even a single issue. But the inner dynamic of the Left Book Club movement, encouraged by official Labour hostility, made the LBC at its height an enthusiastically anti-capitalist force. Members addressed one another as 'comrade' and sang the Internationale at the close of their rallies. Gollancz published *Why You Should be a Socialist* by Strachey for two pennies and achieved a sale of 300,000. Gollancz himself believed that fascism had to be pulled up by the roots, which meant overthrowing capitalism. The Club published Frolich's biography of *Rosa Luxemburg* and Evelyn Anderson's *Hammer or Anvil*, works unlikely to promote a Popular-Front style reconciliation with 'progressive Conservatives'.

The dynamism of the Club was strained by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and broken by the Communist Party's opposition to the War. Its founding editors accepted that the stance of Britain and France made it wise for the Soviet Union to stave off a clash with Nazi Germany if it could. But they could not stomach the cynicism with which anti-fascist themes became empty formulas nor the British Party's pose of 'revolutionary pacifism' following the outbreak of war. Gollancz, Laski and, with hesitations, Strachey broke with the Party but maintained a close relationship with *Tribune*. Though the Club's organisational impetus was checked, it now merged with and re-inforced a stream of the Labour Left that was later known as Bevanism and which was less respectful of coalitionism than the CPGB. Gollancz's talents as a publicist were used to huge effect radicalising Labour politics, indeed radicalising British politics as a whole, in the run up to the 1945 election.

Thus the stance of the founding editors of the LBC in 1939-45 helped to preserve at least some of the earlier gains in the development of an autonomous socialist political culture. And even in the earlier period one suspects that the 'tail' sometimes wagged the dog, with the LBC influencing the politics of the Communist Party itself. It contributed to the somewhat 'leftist' flavour of the Popular Front in its British version and to a Party stance towards the War in 1939-41 which, in practice, fell considerably short of genuine revolutionary defeatism, of the sort appropriate in 1914-18. It would be absurd to deny some link between the LBC at its height and the prestige and projects of the Comintern; nevertheless the premonitions of later 'new left' movements are there and should not be ignored because of the prejudices of Cold War liberalism.

Gollancz lived to become a sponsor of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, a cause he had championed already in the Forties. The account given here suggests that the founders of CND were wise to avoid giving any organisational post to Gollancz. His egotistical, autocratic and absolutist proclivities intensified in late middle age. Nevertheless Gollancz embodied and fostered a species of independent progressivism that had estimable qualities. Like CND, or even the later Vietnam Solidarity Movement, the LBC would appear to have been a radical youth movement, recruiting from the middle classes but with a definite appeal to trade unionists. At its height it had five times as many members as the CPGB and a readership twice as large as any socialist journal can claim today.

Latter-day would-be imitators would do well to consider the strongly anti-capitalist tenor of its propaganda and its ability to link this to a few political questions of burning urgency, above all the threat posed by the rise of fascism. The LBC made a splash by challenging the trend of local and international bourgeois politics and showing how many were prepared to resist it. □

Robin Blackburn is Editor of New Left Review

FEMINISM

Yuppies' lib

Sara Maitland

A Lesser Life — The Myth of Women's Liberation
SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT *Michael Joseph* £12.95

THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION movement in the USA is about 20 years old. It has generated a great deal of excitement and appears to have transformed the lives and certainly the life-expectations not only of American women but of women throughout the world; it has spawned a United Nations Decade of Women, an international conference circuit, a proposed constitutional amendment and a new media industry — to name but a few of the more demonstrable consequences.

But a quarter of all women in *full-time* work in the USA earn less than the poverty level. American women earn only 64 per cent of the male wage: an improvement of barely 14 per cent since 1939. (The UK figure is about 70 per cent, the Swedish 81 per cent). Sixty per cent of American working women have no job-protected maternity leave; half the babies under a year have mothers in the full-time work force, but federal funds for day-care assistance have been cut by a quarter since 1980. As far as working women in the USA are concerned Women's Liberation has proved itself a myth; the movement is a movement which has not delivered the goods.

This is the point of Hewlett's book. It is an important point — and not just for Americans. Although she compares the UK favourably with the States, it compares very badly indeed with the other European countries that Hewlett examines — principally Sweden and Italy — in terms of available child care, job differentials, maternity benefits and other social provision. It is not only reasonable, it is eminently right that British feminists, in these harsh times, should also look to our track record and examine our consciences.

So far, so good. But next Hewlett uses this failure in social provision and the poverty of women, particularly of mothers, to mount a swingeing attack — not on US capitalism, or Reaganism, but on feminism. Now I'm not a great fan of much that comes out of the US women's movement, which seems apolitical, ahistorical and heavily individualistic, based almost entirely on an out-dated Enlightenment understanding of 'rights' and scared silly by socialism. Indeed, if it is true, as Hewlett claims, that the National Organisation of Women wants to see all protective legislation withdrawn and, as policy, will not support maternity leave, then NOW is not merely into elitist individualism, it is actually deranged: anti-sexist legislation, like Trade Union or anti-racist legislation, is surely designed to allow structurally oppressed groups to re-enter the social and economic arena on something more like fair terms, not to deny all difference. Protective legislation may be reformist, but the struggle to win it suggests that it is not usually totally reactionary.

Nevertheless, Hewlett's attack, coming as it does at a time when US feminism is in serious disarray following the overinvestment in and defeat of ERA and the effective organisation of a right-wing populist mood, gives more comfort to the opposition than assistance in analysis to the women's movement. Because Hewlett is profoundly confused herself, she is also confusing. She admits that she no longer can identify with the women's movement, but still looks to it to deliver her personal redemption. She wants the women's movement to abandon consciousness raising, repudiate lesbianism and all autonomous organisation, and concentrate on making itself acceptable to the middle-American bourgeoisie — mainly so that she can maintain her own career 'in the fast lane' while absolving her of the maternal guilt she apparently feels. The way she advises us to move forward is by adopting something that she calls 'social feminism': do not think for one moment that this is any form of socialism; it is in fact exactly the liberal reformism whose failure to liberate women led to the women's liberation movement in the first place.

In the present political context too much feminist time has to go into preserving social gains that were expensively won over the last century. This is an important task, but we must not allow it to silence the fundamental questions which the women's movement originally articulated: Why is the family so profoundly oppressive of women? How is gender difference socially constructed? How can it be de- or re-constructed? What are women's specific engagements in the creation of a just and egalitarian society?

Finally, I don't believe in Hewlett's commitment to working-class women. They are tossed in here and there, but her concern is with 'high achievers', professional women, like herself. She wants to have her cake and eat it too.

Why shouldn't she, come to that? But it is not fair to blame feminism because we haven't given

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her what we never offered. Nor is it fair to abuse feminist methodology as she does: grounding theory in personal experience requires also the politicising of experience, the analysis of personal history within an ideological frame. Hewlett's unexamined ideological frame is American materialism. If the US women's movement is really as she describes it then perhaps the book was salutary there — though it is so tedious, repetitive and whiney that I doubt it. Its publication here is a pointless assault; the book is written for anti-feminists, not to improve our practice. Betty Friedan has rightly described it as a 'deceptive, backlash book'. □

ESSAYS

High-wire highbrow

Alison Hennegan

Baroque-'n'-Roll and Other Essays
BRIGID BROPHY *Hamish Hamilton* £10.95

TO ANY REVIEWER of even merely average kindliness this volume presents something of a problem. How critical may I decently be of a woman who in the first of these essays, 'A Case-Historical Fragment of Autobiography', chronicles (and chronicles with such incisive but generous intelligence that I for one could wish she were not usually so hostile to the autobiographical mode) her dawning recognition that she has contracted the as yet incurable disease of multiple sclerosis?

It is a disease which transforms each day into a series of dismaying battles each of which must be won if some pale shadow of 'ordinary life' is to continue: to check a reference or re-read a crucial passage, for instance, demands that family or friends go to fetch the books you can no longer reach or lift. In circumstances such as those, which make the undertaking and completion of substantial new work nightmarishly defeating, it seems churlish to repeat reviewers' constantly rehearsed doubts about the value of collecting and reprinting previously published occasional pieces.

A relief, then, that this collection has its own partially redeeming unity and logic. Some of Brigid Brophy's favourite subjects - G.B.S., Mozart, Wimbledons ancient and modern - are each represented by a cluster of essays, multifariously drawn from programme notes, book reviews and magazine articles. The four devoted to Shaw and the three to Mozart are particularly rewarding in their unabashedly partisan affection and exuberant intelligence. The other 19 pieces here include two paragraphs written for a *TLS* round-up of undeservedly neglected fiction (Trollope's *Castle Richmond* is Brophy's contender) and a 14-line entry for a biographical digest (Hemingway *aka* H.E. Mingway *aka* He-man-way is her target).

As a writer Brophy likes living dangerously. She revels in engineering unexpectedly rewarding clashes between her highly wrought, formal literary English and the abruptly intrusive vernacular. She loves to connect the hitherto unconnectable, rejoices in illuminating architecture by reference to poetry, painting by reference to music, sculpture by reference to verse metres. It's a high-wire act, exhilarating and risky, best exemplified here in the piece which gives its title to the collection. Marvell, St Teresa in ecstasy, Titian, Purcell's *King Arthur*, Dryden's prose style, Shakespeare's 64th Sonnet and the mediaeval schoolmen's formal logic are all invoked in her continuing pursuit and celebration of a mood, a mode, a moment, a movement which has long preoccupied her: the Baroque.

'Baroque-'n'-Roll' is the only new piece in this book. The bulk of the work, most of it produced within the last seven years, first appeared in the *TLS*, or in *The London Review of Books*, that oddly self-aggrandising and complacent literary journal whose issues not infrequently list no single woman's name amongst reviewers or reviewed. Brophy, with her disturbing ambivalence towards feminism and women (sometimes for, often against) fits comfortably (conformably, I had almost written) in its curious pages. Predictably it was there that the most irritating piece in this collection first appeared: 'He/She/Hesh' is her 1982 review of Casey Miller's and Kate Swift's *Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing* and in it she illustrates many of her least amiable and least admirable characteristics. The authors are slated for claims they never made. What Brophy offers as speculation in one paragraph she treats as fact in the next. Arguments are erected on false premisses (a curiously revealing practice for one so proud of and indebted to her rigorous training in formal logic). The authors are charged with omitting topics they have in fact addressed. The whole piece is shot through with that facetious silliness which marks a Brophy caught on the raw. And, sadly, all of it is written with that casual intellectual arrogance which she can display so lightly and so woundingly. For it is an ironical fact that, vegetarian and consistent opponent of vivisection and blood sports though she be, a Brophy glorying in the mangled remnants of her human adversaries' arguments frequently reveals the same savage triumph as a huntsman holding aloft a fox's bloodied brush. (Anyone who wishes to tell me at this point that sticks and stones may break our bones but names can never hurt us will be received in stony silence.)

It is possible that Brophy is unable to recognise the charge of intellectual arrogance: a passage in the 'Fragment of Autobiography' describes her youthful distress at realising that those Oxford dons who would later prevent her from proceeding to her degree saw only 'cavalier disregard' in her embarrassed indifference to her own high place in the undergraduate hierarchy. But arrogant she certainly is in the way that comes so horribly easily to those women (me too) who were undergraduates at Oxford or Cambridge and who never even realised at the time that, whether we chose to acknowledge it or not, a world had been opened to us that conferred opportunities and advantages unattainable by the vast majority of our fellow-women. *Enfant terrible*; rebel; trouble-shooter: these are personae which have been much cherished and cultivated by Brophy the Writer. There is something deeply dismaying about her seeming failure to recognise that she (Lady Levey, FRSL) has long rebelled from a position of comparative safety unimaginable for many of the women she mocks. □

FOOTNOTES

If you don't write books — and have, moreover, every intention of resisting the urge — you might think it totally uninteresting that the Writers' Guild and Society of Authors, the two major book writers' groups in this country, have just reached agreement with a couple more publishers, Century Hutchinson and Headline, on a **Minimum Terms Agreement**. If you *read*, however, you might like to notice the event.

The recent spate of publishing mergers, the growth of computer and video technologies, the shrinking of government support for literature have, perhaps not entirely by chance, been met by an increase in authors' organisation and militant activity. And, whatever pattern emerges, it's likely to have at least *some* effect on what books get in to the shops. For although the interests of authors and publishers may seem, to readers, to overlap, the divergences can be crucial.

Both parties want to make money, of course, but whereas the majority of authors are concerned with what they have to say, and how, publishers (in particular those who've been swallowed up by consortia) are forced to focus of volume of sales, or prestige, or cash flow, or the cost of storage.

The MTA, on one level, is simply an agreement with a publishing house that its contracts with members of the writers' unions will equal, or exceed, certain minimum terms. These relate to such matters as copyright, royalties, paperback publication — most of them areas already covered by the usual publishers' contracts, but covered, without the MTA, in totally haphazard fashion. Besides its safety-net function, however, the MTA is also an attempt to alter the balance of power — notably via those clauses that relate to an author's right to re-negotiate, after a certain period, her or his contract with a publisher.

The agreement hasn't had an easy journey. It's taken from 1972 — when Brigid Brophy and Maureen Duffy, with a small band of faithful followers, left the then snoozing Society of Authors and allied themselves to the Writers' Guild — for *seven* publishers to have agreed to sign it.

The first were Hamish Hamilton and Journeyman who, in 1978, reached agreement voluntarily. Then, in 1980, the Guild activists (who now included Eva Figes, Tim Jeal and the then *New Statesman* literary editor, David Caute) joined forces with Mark Le Fanu of the slowly re-awakening Society of Authors to compel — by industrial muscle, no less — an agreement from W. H. Allen. Agreements were reached in 1984 with BBC Publications and Faber.

If it's ironic that authors are waking to industrial action now, this may be a sign that the crucial issue of who controls our information and ideas, our entertainment and our leisure, is emerging as one of the most important of the decade.

Harriett Gilbert

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Perdition

Tony Greenstein, Brighton
Victoria Radin (*NS* 6 Feb.) is content to rest her case on the opinions of two hardly disinterested historians, David Cesarani and Martin Gilbert. Both are dedicated Zionists and both have axes to grind.

It is clear that the theme of *Perdition* is not a welcome one to Zionists who base the moral legitimacy of the Israeli state on the Holocaust. Allegations of collaboration by the Zionist movement during the war can only undermine that claim. This is why, although a similar play to *Perdition* has been staged in Israel, there is hostility to its being put on in Britain.

Nor is it true, as Ms Radin alleges, that the allegation of Zionist collaboration with the Nazis is the equivalent of blaming the Jews for their own destruction. It was, after all, the survivors of the Holocaust who were instrumental in bringing the original charges in the Kastner case in Israel. It was they who alleged that the survival of the few was bought with the lives of many. Nor does the relevant quote imply that the Jews deserved what they got, that is simply Ms Radin interpreting her own particular subtext; it is a quote from the Israeli Attorney General, Chaim Cohen, in the Kastner case.

It is a fact documented by a number of Zionist historians, such as Lucy Dawidowicz, that during the Hitler period, the priorities of the Zionist movement were on creating a Jewish state, not fighting anti-semitism. It is also a fact that the Zionist movement was singled out by the Hitlerites as a movement that shared its ideology of race and nation. Ms Radin does however avoid the substance of the Kastner case on which *Perdition* is based. But then how could she defend this senior official of the Israeli government who, after the war, went to Nuremburg and personally testified on behalf of Eichmann's superior, Kurt Becher, saving his life.

Far from *Perdition* being anti-semitic, it is a play that Jewish people who wish to learn about their history and the history of a movement that claims to represent them, have a right to see. It is a right that is at present being denied us.

See Ken Loach, p.19.

Tactical voting

Martin Upham Labour PPC, Enfield North
What a lot of incoherent, under-researched drivel! Nina Fishman and Martin Vogel (*NS* 30 Jan.) appear to lack the intellectual rigour to question their own assumptions, such as the belief that it is possible, or even desirable, for MPs to have 50 per cent of the poll or more; that party support is freely transferable between parties, and that there are no losses thereby; that electorates don't change in all sorts of ways between general elections.

Worse, they based their rickety structure on dubious examples and speculation. The five seats where Labour voters are supposed to have tactically supported the Liberals in 1983 were in fact held by Tories. Labour is supposed to have been 'out of the running' in the South West since 1945. Really? What about the Falmouth, Camborne, Plymouth and Bristol seats? Labour's recovery in that region has been stronger than either 'Alliance' party.

Why compute on 1983 data? Since then we have had the Euro, County and District/Borough elections, all of which illustrate Labour's sharp recovery without even weighing the social changes in the electorate which make swing comparisons between general elections so prone to error. It is the *Alliance* parties which have no chance of being returned. That's why we hear of PR, tactical voting and anything which might allow them a governmental toehold they can use to masquerade as a majority party. They can stuff it!

Dick Pountain, London NW1
Re Neil Kinnock's advice to tactical voters (*NS* 13 Feb.). Any definition of the state of adulthood must of necessity be a complex thing. Most people, however, would agree that one important attribute to this desirable state is the eschewal of wishful thinking. On this ground, tactical voters could perhaps be said to be more 'grown up' than the Labour leader himself.

John Hough, Labour PPC, Holland with Boston
In 1983 when I was the Labour candidate in Brigg and Cleethorpes, my Alliance opponent was reduced, in his final appeal to the electorate, to ask for people's votes because the *New Statesman* had urged them to vote tactically. The reduction of the democratic process to one where policy disappears and the only argument of the Alliance is the tactical vote is a dangerous trend. If you want to urge voters to support the Alliance, say so. Don't confuse the issue with a spurious call for tactical voting.

A poet's tribute

Roger Woddis, London N13
The death of 'Sagittarius' at the age of 90 is something to be both mourned and celebrated. Olga Miller, my illustrious predecessor, wrote satirical verse for this magazine for over 20 years, and there are few practising the craft today who can match her skill, insight, savagery of wit and sheer beauty of line. She would have found it ironic, possibly saddening, that what she wrote over 50 years ago is still relevant:

Like leaves in Vallombrosa,
Like virgins in Virginia,
Like monks on Monte Rosa,
Like chiefs in Abyssinia,
Like banditry in China,
Like Turcomen in Khiva,
Like herring in Loch Fyne are
Committees in Geneva.

Spy satellite

Nicolas Walter, London N1
You are surely right to publish information about the Zircon project for a British spy satellite (*NS* 23 Jan.), so that we may know what our rulers are doing in our name and at our expense; and you deserve all the support you may need from your readers. But you are surely wrong to say the issue is not that the project exists but that it has been concealed from Parliament.

After all, would the position be any different if the project had been reported to the Public Accounts Committee? There is no doubt that it would be supported by all the main parties in Parliament — Labour as well as Conservative and Alliance — in just the same way as the two World Wars, the Secret and Security services, conscription and rearmament, the emergency government system and the Official Secrets Acts, the British atomic and hydrogen bombs, the American nuclear bases in Britain, the Falklands war, and so on. And whatever so-called left-wing parties may say in opposition, what they do in office never seems to change.

No, the issues shouldn't be obscured with smokescreens of patriotism or parliamentarism, of national security or administrative accountability. They should be exposed clearly for what they are — militarism and liberty: whether this country is at war, and whether we are free to discuss and decide the question.

Pensioned off

It isn't true, as we said last week of republican Willie Hamilton MP, that MPs who are defeated in elections get better pensions than those who simply retire. The myth arises from the 'resettlement grant' payable to MPs who leave the Commons for whatever reason before retirement age, which doesn't apply to Willie anyway. Sorry, Wills.

New Statesman subscribers

Subscribers, like ourselves still smarting from the mysterious disappearance in the post of copies of the 31 October 1986 issue of the *NS*, might like to know that *NS* has emerged victorious from this particular skirmish with the PO. Croydon Post Office has finally credited us with the cost of that week's UK contract posting.

Joanne Hurst

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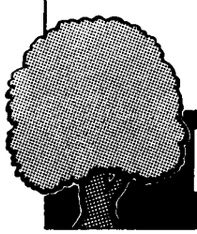

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AFFINITIES. Discerning Dating for busy, single, professional people like you — who don't believe in leaving their personal lives to chance. Tel. 01-226 3337 for further details. W51.8

ART TEACHER, gentle, caring, aware and absurdly old for fatherhood, seeks woman who might consider creating a child with him. Box (07)4511. W7.11

ATTRACTIVE, SEPARATED woman artist, in mid fifties, with grown up family and sincere Christian beliefs, seeks a man's friendship. Sussex preferred. Box (08)4537. W8.6

BACHELOR, 40, seeks attractive, sensitive female for decent relationship. Interests: politics, sports and theatre. London and M4 westwards. Box (08)4547. W8.7

BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL Girls wish to contact gentlemen for friendship, love and marriage. Please send s.a.e. for further details of this serious programme to: Miss S. Ounban, P.O. Box 39, Reigate, Surrey RH2 8YX. W7.16

CAN THERE possibly be an equable, relaxed woman, blessed of a bit of verve and style, who would throw out a line to a wholly uncomplicated, easy-going, unattached male, of 51 summers living in Liverpool. Box (08)4536. W8.8

CRAFTSMAN/DESIGNER, attractive, 38, 5' 10", solvent, seeks female (thirties) with interests in the arts, to share happy, independent life style. London. Box (08)4555. W8.9

CREDO: YOUTHFUL, humorous, outgoing men of intelligence and feeling (over 59) who would like the weekend company of ditto London woman (presentable, working) do exist. Box (08)4543. W8.10

DATELINE'S PSYCHOLOGICALLY accurate introductions lead to pleasant friendships, spontaneous affairs and firm, lasting relationships including marriage. All ages, all areas. Free details: Dateline Computer Dating. Dept. (7NS), 23 Abingdon Rd, London W8. Tel. 01-938 1011. N49.20

Enrapt by **BEETHOVEN, LOUIS ARMSTRONG,** the **IMPRESSIONISTS?** Then read on—This warm, affectionate graduate woman, 40s, seeks to explore relationships, countryside, London with sensitive, caring, non-macho post-graduate male, 45-60. **OBSERVER** reader preferred to share most NS interests. Box (06)4479. W6.6

FEMINIST, SOCIALIST, 36. Likes: films, sports, country walks, reading, talking and holidays. Wants mature, relaxed man with a view to a long-term relationship. Box (08)4538. W8.11

FRIENDLY, EASY-GOING graduate, 27, seeks independent female for companionship. Manchester. I'm liberal/leftish, less sexist than usual. Likes: films, books, plays, countryside, cats, curries. Box (07)4510. W7.22

HEARTSEARCHERS PLEASE NOTE that telephone bookings can only be accepted if accompanied by a Credit Card Number (Access, American Express, Barclaycard, Diners' Club, Visa). N27.18

LONDON FEMALE in her mid-thirties, with many friends, enjoying life and work, would still like to meet tall, leftish man with international outlook. Box (08)4542. W8.12

MALE, 35, own flat (NW London), researcher, enjoys: cooking, films, art, walking, cycling, — warm, considerate, cuddly, kind, seeks similar woman for friendship and more. Box (08)4540. W8.13

PROFESSIONAL MAN, separated, radical, artistic interests, 55, Guardian reader, Radio 3 listener, pianist, seeks sensitive, affectionate, caring woman, 30-45, for long-term relationship. South West. Box (07)4493. W7.29

SLIM, EASY going, music loving Englishman, 47, in stale marriage, could be free some days, to meet and develop an open ended friendship, with similar lady of any age. Box (07)4494. W7.31

SUN, SEA and sand in April? Attractive, unattached male, 36, seeks similar female, 25 +, to share Cretan frolics (erotic and intellectual) and possible relationship. Photo appreciated. Box (08)4539. W8.14

UNEMPLOYED MALE (30), quite ordinary, addicted to: books, cinema, music (The Smiths to Latin plainchant), theatre, pubs, talking and listening, seeks female for friendship, possibly permanent relationship. Manchester area. Box (07)4490. W7.33

WARMLY MISCHIEVOUS, seductive, curly-haired man (young 37), lively, intelligent, creative, attractive, gentle, affectionate, would love to meet similarly imaginative, adventurous, warm, sensual, versatile, discreet female (s) and/or couples for exciting, stimulating fun, fantasies, friendship. London. Photo, frank letter, please. Box (08)4541. W8.15

WOMAN, YOUNG 33, living Yorks, good earthy looks, now single, smoking wino, fit, healthy, eclectic interests, seeks humorous man, wild places, some risks, some comforts. Box (08)4548. W8.16

WOMAN, 38, warm, anti-sexist, graduate, pretty, young-looking, 5' 6", interests: wining-dining, cinema, theatre, dislikes: sport, pubs — seeks happy, well-balanced, affectionate man, 36-43, for intense, mutually-caring, lasting relationship. E. London. Box (08)4554. W8.17

YOUTHFUL, over 60 male, resident NW London seeks lady for non-platonic friendship; ample figure no obstacle. Am interested in languages and science fiction. Photo appreciated. Box (08)4553. W8.18

OLD FRIENDS

DOES LIFE BEGIN AT 40?

MARRIAGE, FRIENDSHIP or COMPANIONSHIP:
the introduction agency for the 40s, 50s, & 60s

Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, N5 2DB
Telephone: 01-226 5432

BILLBOARD

Enquiries: Laura Berryman 01-251 5487

Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) **ANIMAL FARM, SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR.** Lyttelton (proscenium stage) **THE MAGISTRATE, COMING IN TO LAND.** Cottesloe (small auditorium) **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, BOPHA, THREE MEN ON A HORSE.** See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629. 20 & 21 Feb. 7.30pm. University College Opera in **THE DEVIL'S WALL by Smetana.** 25, 26, 28 Feb. at 7.30 p.m. (plus 1.30 p.m. 25th) **THE ELDER SON** by Vampilov performed in Russian by **University of London School of Slavonic & East European Studies.**

Sponsorship

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AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL JANET BANKS 01-251 5487

Deadline: 4pm Mondays

SUN 22 FEB

MAPAM an evening on 'The Jewish East End: 50 years after Cable Street' with Bernard Kops 8 p.m. Hashomer House, 37a Broadhurst Gardens, London NW6. 01-328 5451.

MON 23 FEB

BENEATH THE WHITE COAT. A seminar series on Science & Politics in the 1980s organised by the British Society for the Social Responsibility in Science. The Marquis of Granby, Chandos Place, WC2. This week: Judy Clarke "Nuclear Fusion — Whose Fantasy?"

WED 28 FEB

OXFORD CENTRE for African Studies **'Forced Labour and Migration in Africa'** 10 a.m. at **Nuffield College, Oxford.** Enquiries: History Workshop Centre, Ruskin College, Oxford OX1 2HE, tel. 0865 515345.

CONFERENCE

TELEVISION & THE FAMILY: A New Agenda. 25/26 February. Conference at Institute of Education, London. Contact: Janet Willis, BFI on 01-437 4355 for details.

MON 2 MAR

FDA: First Division Association is holding a lecture to mark the Third Anniversary of the ban on Union membership at GCHQ. The lecture to be given by **John Lloyd** is entitled *'Trade Unions and Freedom'*. It will be held at 6 p.m. at Stakis St Ermins Hotel, Caxton Street, SW1. Any member of the public is welcome to attend.

WED 4 MAR

HOUSING & PLANNING POLICIES: Their Effect on Women, Venue: Sheffield. One day event involving workshops on housing, retailing, transportation. £5/£10 with proceedings. Contact: Dorothy Reeves (0742) 731650.

FORTHCOMING

LEGAL SERVICES: a Socialist Alternative For Lawyers and Non-Lawyers. Conference at University of Leicestershire Weekend 4/5 April 1987. Accommodation available. Application forms from: Pauline Hendry, 74 Windsor Road, London E7.

Campaign Against Dounreay Expansion

STOP THE PLUTONIUM REPROCESSING PLANT AT DOUNREAY

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
in Shetland
3-5 JULY 1987

Speakers from:
Ireland, Faroe, Iceland, Norway, Germany, Belgium and Britain.

Details from:
Shetland CADE, Albert Buildings, Lerwick, Shetland.

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BACKCHAT

FIRST PERSON

Drop dead, Geoffrey

Andrew Lumsden

BY THE STANDARDS of the right-wing press in the mid-Eighties, it was a very little trashing. But it was on the leader page and Felix's mother was on the blower from true-blue Somerset in hours asking him if he'd seen the bit about Andrew, and what was it all about? What indeed?

'In this country there is in one respect a consensus,' wrote Geoffrey Wheatcroft — *Spectator* contributor, *Daily Telegraph* contributor — in his 'Sixth Column' slot in the latter on 13 January, ' . . . a consensus between Mr Andrew Lumsden of the *New Statesman*, who thinks Aids victims are martyrs, and Sir John Junor of the *Sunday Express*, who thinks they've got what they asked for. At least everyone agrees it is no laughing matter.'

But . . . I haven't ever said or written that people with Aids are martyrs. And the able and excellent Mr Wheatcroft hadn't rung me up to check. Bit of a right-of-reply situation here, I said to myself. An opportunity for 'one of those men who ought to shoot themselves' (*George V*) to stupefy the Home & Western Counties mob with a couple of remarks on Aids in the *Telegraph*. Good God, sir, madam, what's this fellow doing in our paper?

Gentle, even affectionate mockery would be the ticket, I thought. It's no easy trick to get under the boom which the Tory qualities have lowered, ever since Gutenberg, on yer actual direct *quotation* from or fragment of writing by an out . . . um, er, you know . . . even though from Peter Ackroyd sideways they're full of admiration for Oscar Wilde. He's dead, see.

I used once to be an employee of the *Daily Telegraph*. Yes I was. I've done a sort of Paul Johnson in reverse I suppose. They gave me my first job. 'As if it were yesterday,' I accordingly began my attempt to get under the wire at the *Telegraph*, 'I remember Sir Colin Coote's leaving-party.' He was *DT* editor in those remote early Sixties.

'I learnt to drink in the daytime,' I carried on, 'the most invaluable lesson Fleet Street has to offer.' And then I segued into the real topic with, 'which reminds me by no rational process of thought that I can uncover of my old friend Geoffrey Wheatcroft. Actually' — I brought myself up short — 'he isn't an old friend. It's barely credible in two Fleet Street fellows, but to oneanother we are as strangers.'

And so, tailoring my efforts to fit like a 'T' to exactly the same space where Wheatcroft's original had lain, I trod on the pedal: 'All the more civil of him to have spoken of me, my name's first appearance in the paper in, dear God, twenty years.

'Unless' (who could resist teasing the *Telegraph*?) 'unless the old paper's ever-splendid news reporters by any chance covered my little misadventure of 1972 when in a very unsuitable frock I was removed by police at the landlord's invitation from one of London's best-known gay pubs and charged with threatening behaviour. It wasn't that gown in particular the landlord disliked, though my friends did, but gowns on boys *per se* . . .'

What, what? Bushy white military eyebrows rising in horror in Aldershot. I pressed ahead: 'Anyway, here I am again, described by Mr Wheatcroft as "Mr Andrew Lumsden of the *New Statesman* who thinks Aids victims are martyrs". We will pass over the word victims,' I said sombrely, 'though a politer society hopes to accord dignity by speaking of people or persons with Aids. But, "martyrs"?'

In for the jugular: 'Certainly, had I been asked, I see what has happened so far with Aids as entirely a massacre of the innocents. But frightened or dying or dead innocents are not martyrs. To what cause? Unless to life and to the pursuit in other people's company of life's pleasures and life's affections. I did some weeks ago in the *NS* describe in print the death of an old friend from Aids. But there was no religiosity about it.'

All wasted. Po-faced no from the *Telegraph*. Well honestly, what could I expect? Neither the seriousness nor the fun could be allowed under the boom. They've no sense of humour on the right. I imagine that's why I had to get out and why Paul Johnson had to go in. Poor chap, the sometime Yorick of the *New Statesman* whose skull now grins at us weekly from the *Spectator*. I knew him well (didn't really).

Lo and behold, Margaret blew into town a few days ago and I discovered that matters *in re* Wheatcroft and his lapse were worse than I'd realised. Margaret is mother of Woodward, my American as distinct from my British special relationship. She has a home in Carmel, California, the same where Clint has just been elected mayor. (Last time she was over she stayed with my parents and said to my mother, 'What a nice tight ass you've got,' which just shows the difference between Californian culture and rural English.)

We drank Scotch from her plastic travelling-bottle in her stopover Knightsbridge digs. She ran through the old London friends she'd been looking up: ' . . . and last night I had dinner with my dear friend Steve Wheatcroft. Do you ever see his son Geoffrey?' 'Ah, er, ahem . . . ' I eyed Margaret carefully: 'I read him from time to time. He lied about me in the *Telegraph* only the other day.'

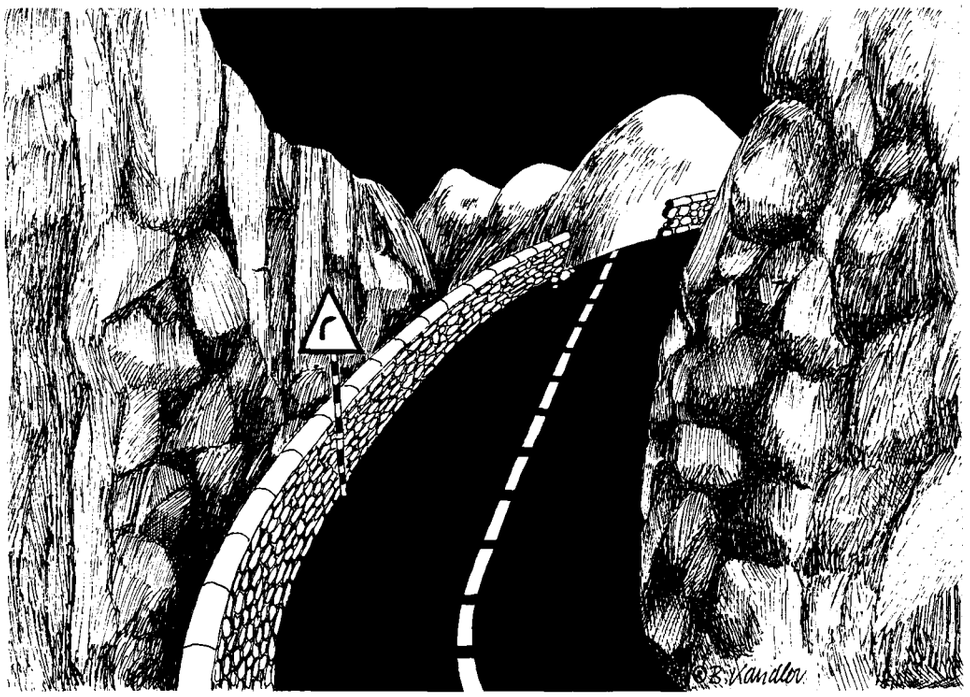
It's a fine thing when the son of a dear old friend of your American lover's mother starts poking at you, as with a stick, in front of over 1 million avid Conservative readers. And no right of reply. □

FOOD

Holy trinity

Suzy Benghiat

GARLIC, TURMERIC and lime: to me, this combination of flavours at once evokes the Middle East — or, I should say, my childhood in Egypt, since you seldom find it in the rest of the region. Even in Egypt it was found mostly in the Jewish communities with Italian or Spanish influences, where food flavoured in this way was called 'sofritto'. It is difficult to explain the name, since the method of cooking is more akin to



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braising than to the frying that 'sofritto' would imply. Veal, chicken and fish or minced fish balls were generally cooked in this way, as well as the more unusual brains.

I personally like to apply this method to vegetable cooking: especially potatoes, of which I prepare a large quantity, to keep some to eat cold. In times of stress, every time I pass by the kitchen I pick one — so much less sinful than chocolate and, to me, so much more enjoyable. Celery, celeriac and Jerusalem artichokes are delicious cooked in this way.

The method is simple: after washing and preparing the vegetables (in the case of potatoes and Jerusalem artichokes, no peeling, just a good scrubbing is enough), you put them in a saucepan large enough to take the vegetables in one layer, with a little oil (corn or sunflower; if you want the extra flavour, your favourite olive oil) thinly to coat the bottom of the pan. You add garlic, turmeric, lime or lemon juice, salt and just enough water barely to cover; bring to the boil, lower the heat, cover the pan and shake it with the lid on. Simmer until done: new potatoes can take as little as 6 to 8 minutes; older ones, cut into chunks, may take a few minutes more. You might need to add a little more water, or you might find that, once the vegetables are cooked, there is too much liquid left, in which case you just take the vegetables out and reduce the liquid in the pan to a more concentrated sauce.

Celery is not one of my favourite vegetables, except cooked in this way. For, say, one head of celery, I'd use one or two cloves of garlic, very thinly sliced, the juice of one lemon or so, sea salt and ½ teaspoon of turmeric. Wash and scrub the celery and cut it into roughly 2 inch (5 cm) pieces, removing strings if necessary, and cook as above. If you like your celery firm it should take about 7 to 8 minutes; if you prefer it soft it will take about twice that time.

Rabbit sofritto

The other day I bought some excellent looking farm rabbit from the supermarket. I knew, long before getting home, that I was going to 'sofritto' it.

2 lb (1 kg) rabbit pieces
Enough oil to line base of pan
1 large onion, thinly sliced
4-5 cloves garlic, whole and unpeeled
1 heaped tsp turmeric
Juice 1-2 limes or lemons
Salt

Pour the oil into the saucepan, set it on a medium heat and add the onion. When this is soft and transparent, add all the other ingredients, keeping the juice of one of the limes (or lemons) to be added later if necessary, and mix well. Add water, barely enough to cover, bring to the boil, lower the heat, cover and simmer.

The rabbit should take about half an hour to cook. When it is done, remove and keep warm. If there is too much liquid, increase the heat and reduce it to a thickish, flavourful sauce. Taste; you might like to add more lemon juice at this stage.

The garlic should be soft by now. Remove the cloves, put them on a plate and squash them with the back of a fork or spoon. Garlic paste will ooze out: return this to the pan and mix with the sauce. This is a good method if you hate to peel garlic, but also because the flavour is very subtle. Please don't be tempted, because I use the word 'paste', to use commercial garlic paste, or garlic salt for that matter. I find both absolutely disgusting.

Taste and adjust the seasoning — it should be quite lemony — and pour the sauce over the rabbit. This is delicious with new steamed or large baked potatoes.

In the summer I'd serve it cold. Put the cooked rabbit pieces in a fairly shallow dish and strain the sauce over them, leave to cool, then refrigerate. Next day you will find the meat embedded in a gold, lemony jelly as lovely to look at as to taste. The bits of onion, etc., retrieved after straining the sauce can be mixed with a little thick plain yogurt and eaten with baked potato.

Roast chicken

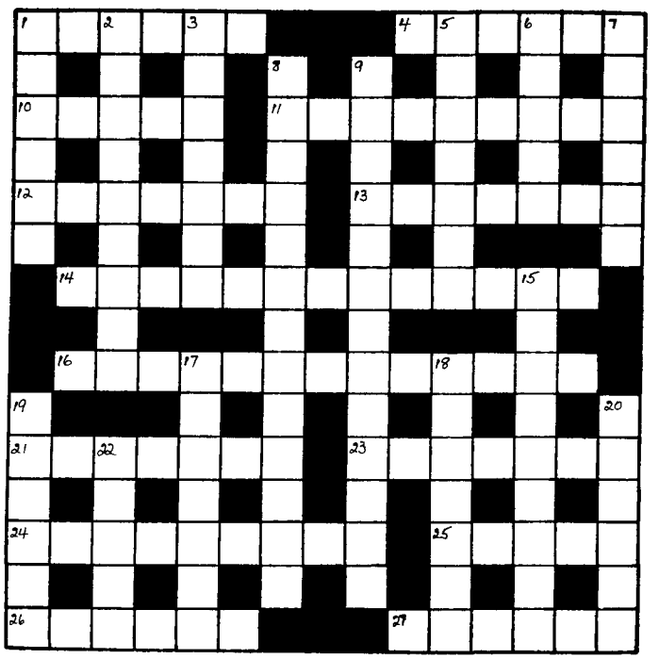
I recently hit on a method of roasting a large chicken to perfection without being faced with a beautiful looking bird only to discover, once you start carving, that the inside of the legs is still pink. I've used this method with plain roast chicken and with various flavourings — it always works. Here it is with garlic and turmeric.

1 large, good quality chicken
4-5 cloves garlic
1 heaped tsp turmeric
Juice 1 lemon
About 1 tbsp oil

Finely chop a couple of cloves of garlic and mix them in a bowl with the salt, turmeric, lemon juice and oil. Dry the

Weekend Crossword 1548

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1548, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 10 March.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

ACROSS

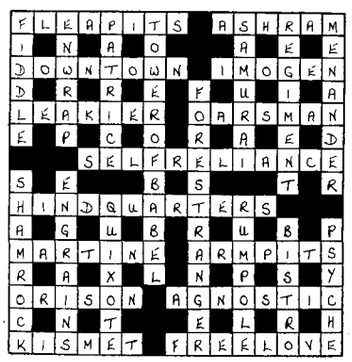
1. Act to live and enjoy possessions (6)
4. Old cricketer goes in at getting the bird (6)
10. In the pub soldiers are wearing less clothes (5)
11. Six-footer having Lizzie beside a rotten tree (9)
12. Take too much, having the middle of the meal in public (7)
13. Adjective — and in French it holds good when preceding the article (7)
14. Make my sun match her flower (13)
16. The resounding right always live with a share (13)
21. Language which gets him mixed up about an animal (7)
23. Rushing to make the drink on the gas? (7)
24. Lass doing wrong for musical effect (9)
25. Leading with edge in middle (5)
26. Fashionable part of address you live at (6)
27. Saw it was almost the opposite of paradise in bed (6)

DOWN

1. If he lost favour, the monkey would remain a bachelor (6)
2. It is a lucky thing farm animals work the land (9)
3. Wrongly vie with arty entertainment (7)
5. Bat and play crudely with resentment following (7)
6. The round for dismissal (5)
7. Smooth and cylindrical (6)
8. Steak found when one enters the burning wood behind the house (13)
9. Wait for a speech as a means of getting things off one's chest (13)
15. Othello, for example (9)
17. Architectural swell (7)
18. Gad about in wild parties (7)
19. I am old when portrayed (6)
20. Admitted a strong desire (6)
22. Glorify without head to lift up (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1546



Prizewinner to 1546
Matthew Pearce
(Lincoln)

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chicken and use your hands to rub it with the mixture all over. Insert some of the mixture carefully under the skin, not forgetting the legs and thighs, inside and out. Try not to tear the skin.

Put whatever is left of the mixture, plus the rest of the garlic whole and unpeeled, with a glassful of water in an ovenproof dish or casserole into which the chicken will just fit snugly. Place the chicken in the dish and cover it with a large piece of foil, tucking it in all round to reduce evaporation as much as possible.

Put it in the oven, which you turn on to medium heat now — yes, only now — 350-375°F (180-190°C, gas 4-5). About 30 to 40 minutes *after it has reached this heat* check the chicken (stick a knife into the thickest part of the thigh: the juice should run out clear and not pink). If it is still not cooked through, rewrap it and put it back for a while.

When it's ready take it out carefully and add a little water to the casserole. The garlic should be soft: squeeze it as in the previous recipe. Then place the chicken on a roasting rack over the casserole, return it to the oven and increase the heat to very high. Let the skin become properly crisp, then spoon the sauce over the chicken. You'll find that not only will the whole bird be cooked to perfection, but the flesh will also be succulent rather than dry.

NB: Turmeric is an extremely strong colouring, so strong that stains are very difficult to remove, so be extra careful when you use it. □

Suzy Benghiat's Middle Eastern Cookery *is published by Weidenfeld.*

Weekend competition

No 2963 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Could we have lyrics from the show-stopper in Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest musical, *Kama Sutra*? Max. 12 lines by 4 March, please.

No 2960 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Conservative party election propaganda on the theme of Tebbit's alleged pronouncement that 'nobody with a conscience votes Tory'.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Old Bill Shakspeer must be yorning in his grave: sumthing like twenty thousand of you kwoted that bit from posey old Hamlet about conscience making 'cowards of us all'. In the lite of that, theres a Sphesherl Menshon to John Marriott, John Stanley and Steve Foulger for nowing about Richard III (*theres* a man) and his 'conscience is but a word that cowards use' — but I'm still not convinced that Thatcher's laddies would even now who Shakspeer *was*. Dont they all cuddle up of an evening with *Money-Maker's Weekly*, *Which Porsche*? and *Dora the Dominatrix* (with pictures)? Am I rong? Anyway, a tenner to the winners (some of who dont kwote from Shakspeer at all) and copies of this paje will be sent to Saatchis to see if they want to make anywun an ofer.

'Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all.' As always our national playwright (who, incidentally, managed pretty well without any Arts Council subsidy!) hits the nail on the head. From the pusillanimous Hamlet through the 'conchies' of the First World War to those who defy the will of the British People over capital punishment, 'conscience' has provided the spineless with a fine excuse for evading decisive action.

Now, though, Britain has a leader willing to grasp the nettle, whether in liberating the beleaguered Falklanders or speaking out fearlessly for prisoners of . . . er . . . of the vile Soviet system. She knows that leadership means taking unpalatable decisions, and leaves 'conscience' to the socialistic moaning minnies and effete continental philosophers. We're a proudly pragmatic race, and I believe most Britons respect her the more for it. So on polling day for heaven's sake don't show the white feather — VOTE CONSERVATIVE FOR A CONSCIENCE-FREE FUTURE!

PETER NORMAN

Film clip: children grabbing another child's sweets. Adult arrives to supervise sharing. Sweet-owner cries. CUT to Margaret Thatcher, watching monitor. She smiles, speaks to camera.

As a mother, I have a great sympathy for children. We all remember how painful it is, after saving our pennies for those long weeks, to be made to share those precious sweets. The others could have saved their pennies, too, couldn't they? But no. Because of a childhood bogeyman called Conscience, they come grabbing for what should be yours. *(Zoom in)* Get rid of that bogeyman. Grow up. *CUT to close-up adult's hand taking child's sweets. Freeze frame. MT voice over:*

There's your Conscience. Interfering. Bossy. Totalitarian.

CUT to MT, close-up.

Good mothers want their children to be healthily greedy. They know it's natural and right. So remember — Conservatism frees you from Conscience. Vote Conservative. Beat the bogeyman.

ALISON PRINCE

Stately home, large formal gardens, rolling green countryside, seen from the air.

Bland, soothing male voice-over: Conscience, bad conscience, guilty conscience, conscience stricken, conscience ridden. Under Labour conscience has always been associated with evil, guilt, affliction, infestation and pain. Under Labour conscience was a serious case of ethical overmanning.

We will privatise conscience. We will put conscience back where it belongs, firmly in the realm of individual choice. Yes! Under the Tories every man will have his own conscience, free to operate untrammelled by outside interference, free to concern itself with its owner's affairs. And the poor? The ill? The homeless? The exploited? The persecuted? *We have not forgotten them.*

They too will have their own consciences. Under the Tory privatisation scheme everyone will be provided with a conscience free of charge. Remember! Conscience makes Conservatives of us all.

Fade to Vaughan Williams' 'Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis'.

J. SEERY

Had a good laugh lately? No?

Then try reading the Sermon on the Mount. It'll have you in fits. The poor? The meek? The peacemakers? Funny, isn't it, the way these hippy manifestos always see a big future for wimps and spongers?

But there's a serious side to all this.

Let's face it. We've all got a heart. We're all a bit of a pushover for bleeding-heart appeals and socialist pie-in-the-sky. And that's the danger. Because the more we let ourselves be taken in by share-the-wealth dreams, the less money there'll be for us.

The fact is, when you've seen one starving baby you've seen them all. So get wise. Go for what you want. And screw everyone else. Only one party has the guts to face reality. And its leader isn't called David or Neil. So don't say you haven't been told.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

What was the miserable defence of Commie lovers like Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blake?

CONSCIENCE . . .

What is the usual, muddled excuse used by loony-left councils to justify handouts of honest ratepayers' cash to gays, ethnics, junkies, child-molesters and promiscuous unmarried mothers?

CONSCIENCE . . .

What is the pusillanimous word that condones the sickly refusal to hang murderers, flog muggers, castrate rapists and allow villains to evade true justice with Mickey Mouse sentences?

CONSCIENCE . . .

So don't let conscience fool you . . . it's just another word for surrender, weakness, socialism and cop out. A conscience may be okay for Jiminy Cricket . . . but what's right for an insect is not nearly good enough for red-blooded, vertebrate Britons . . . So chuck it . . . leave the conscience bit to the weirdos and nut-cutlet brigade . . . Vote for some spine in our society . . . Vote Conservative.

RUSSELL LUCAS

Rear view of flat-capped citizen

Voice; Hey, you!

Citizen turns homely face to camera, removes fag

Citizen: Who, me?

Voice: Yes, you. We need you.

Citizen: Need me? Need *me*? No, guv, you must've got the wrong bloke. I'm nobody.

Voice: It's you we want. You care about defending this country of ours from its enemies, don't you? You care about our children growing up protected by a strong and efficient police force? You care about setting our country's assets free?

Citizen grins sheepishly

Citizen: Put like that, guv, course I do.

Voice: Well then, you're not just nobody, you're a nobody-with-a-conscience. And if enough of you nobodies-with-consciences vote for us, we can keep this country safe for future generations.

Citizen stubs out fag, straightens shoulders

Voice: Remember. Nobody-with-a-conscience votes Conservative.

NOEL PETTY

The Conservatives offer a real alternative in the forthcoming General Election. Labour are complaining about the poor, the old, state education and the NHS. But why should *you*? After all, those things don't affect you. If the poor want help, *they* can vote Labour. When was the last time they voted Conservative to give you a tax cut?

ROGER PEBODY

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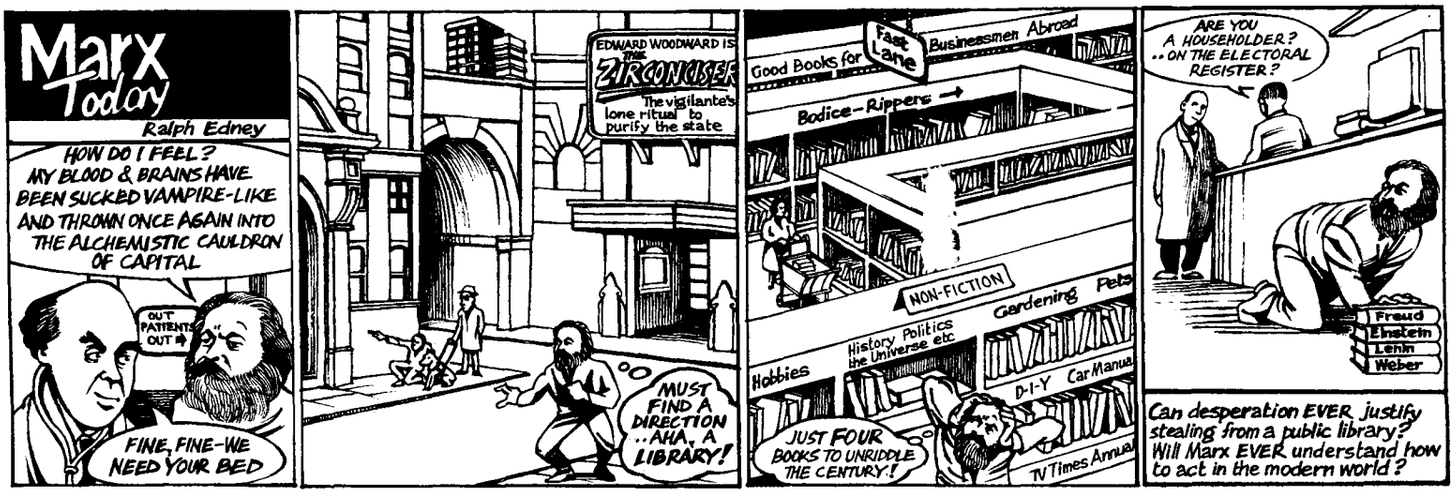
Marx Today
Ralph Edney
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Chess

MY LIPS ARE sealed on the Kasparov-Short match, for fear of spoiling Channel 4's latest attempt to refresh the sports that other channels cannot reach. Six games of speed chess, that's entertainment — if the viewing figures say so. In order to get into a match for the title, Short will have to survive a rigorous series of eliminating competitions stretching right into 1989. At least his high rating is a ladder that lifts him straight up to the interzonal stage. Miles and Nunn can claim similar exemption from strife at the zonal level.

Others have to get there the hard way, which is why Chandler, Speelman, Mestel, Hodgson, Flear (all England), Condie, McNab (the Scots), Le Blancq (Guernsey & Jersey), John Delaney (Ireland), Kalinin and your correspondent (Wales) are in Bath this week for the Praxis British Zonal, scrapping over three places. Playing sessions are 1-7pm in the Guildhall with a rest day on the 24th and the final round on the 25th. England will be expecting to claim all the British berths, with Chandler, Speelman and Mestel favourites to qualify for the next phase.

If anyone can trouble the established trio, I suspect it might be Mark Condie, who celebrated his 22nd birthday a week ago. At the zonal stage of the last elimination cycle his form was hot one day and stone-cold the next (youth and inexperience, perhaps), but he made a painfully deep impression on me with a combination that picked up the award for brilliancy:

Condie-Botterill, British Zonal, Brighton 1984. Queen's Gambit Accepted.
1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. e3 e6 5. Bxc4 c5 6. 0-0 a6 7. Qe2 b5 8. Bb3 Bb7 9. Rd1 Nbd7 10. e4!? cxd4 11. e5 Nd5 Seirawan played 11 . . . Bxf3 12. gxf3 Nh5 in a 1983 game against Timman. Probably a better example to follow, though Black lost that one too. **12. Rxd4 Be7 13. Rg4 Qc7 14. Bd2 g6 15. Nc3 Nxc3 16. Bxc3 Rc8 17. Re1 h5!? 18. Rd4 0-0?** If I had seen what was coming I would have played 18 . . . Nc5 19. Bc2 Qc6, with . . . Na4 in mind. **19. Bxe6! Bxf3** Naturally Black cannot go in for 19 . . . fxe6 20. Qd3. But I thought there was nothing to worry about now, as I was only reckoning with 20. Qxf3 fxe6 21. Qd3 Nxe5 22. Rxe5 Qxe5 23. Qxg6+ Qg7 24. Qxh5 Rf5, which is good for Black. **20. Qd3! Nxe5 21. Rxe5 Qxe5 22. Qxg6+ Qg7** Or 22 . . . Kh8 23. Qh6+ Kg8 24. Rg4+ Bxg4 25. Qg6+. **23. Qxg7+ Kxg7 24. Bxc8! Bf6 25. Bxa6 Be2 26. Rd5 Bxc3 27. bxc3 Bc4 28. Rxh5 Ra8 29. Bxb5 Kg6 30. Rc5 1-0.** Come to think of it, the last time I played in Bath, in the European Team Finals in 1973, I lost the brilliancy prize game – to a little Latvian guy called Tal!

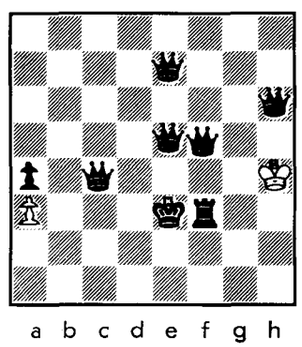
Alongside the male Zonal there is also a women's Zonal, in which the struggle for a single qualifying place looks to be a two-horse race between Sheila Jackson and Susan Arkell. At Brighton two years ago Susan edged Sheila out by catching her in an opening trap. This time Sheila, a Liverpudlian who works for Lambeth Council, will be determined to re-assert her status as top lady. I would rate Anna Delaney, sister of John, as the outsider most likely to cause an upset.

Here are the **solutions** to the studies given last week, with positions in Forsyth notation.

Miller, 1966 [16/7p/B1r2P/16/7R/K2k4]: **1. Rd2 + Kc1 2. Bb6 Rxf5 3. Be3 Rf3 4. Bxh6 Rc3 5. Bg5 or 3 . . . Re5 4. Bxh6 Re1 5. Ka2.** Death by *zugzwang* and discovered check for the Black Rook.

Kasparian, 1962 [1R6/8/b7/8/kp5b/2p5/P1K1p3/2BN4]: **1. Nb2 + !** Definitely not 1. Re8? Bd3+. **Ka5 2. Re8 e1 = Q 3. Rxe1 Bxe1 4. a3! bxa3 5. Nd1 a2 6. Nxc3 a1 = Q 7. Bb2 Bd3 + 8. Kb3 Bc4 + 9. Kc2** and draws, thanks to the imprisonment of Black's Queen.

Hanging over from the As-Souli position in the Christmas issue was a query about *shatranj*, ancestor of modern chess. How could two Firzans (moving like bishops, only just one square at a go) face each other on squares of the same colour? I found the answer in Murray's *A History of Chess* (Oxford, 1913). On reaching the eighth rank a pawn automatically became a Firzan, no other promotion being available. Murray actually gave some 290 *shatranj* problems, culled from MSS, many featuring multiple Firzans. In this position Black has no less than five Firzans (that's what those things that look like Queens are), with the aid of which he is to play and *mate the White Shah on e5 in five moves*. As a reminder of the Firzan's rather limited power, note that in the diagram the White Shah can go to h5, but not to g5 (controlled by the Fh6) or to g4 (because of the Ff5).



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This England

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☐ In an effort to help old people survive the cold a Kent company has developed a cabin for old people to sit inside. It is just big enough to take an armchair and a bookshelf and has a large, double glazed window so the occupant can see out to watch television. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. M. Moger)

☐ A radio station played a tape of music in reverse for more than an hour early yesterday. Mr Eddie Vickers, managing director of Severn Sound radio, said, 'We had no complaints from listeners.' — *Daily Telegraph* (W. Pugh)

☐ Scientists have flushed out a bizarre scientific curiosity on the edge of Dartmoor. They have pinpointed the world's most radioactive toilet, a nuclear 'inconvenience' created by radioactive radon gas seeping up through granite beneath Chagford village's health centre of all places. — *Observer* (Colin Gray)

☐ Two enterprising women were helped by a government scheme for new businesses to set up a brothel, Newport magistrates were told yesterday. While men visited their 'health studios' for sex sessions, the women were also getting £40 a week from the Manpower Services Commission. — *Guardian* (F. J. G. Ebling)

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